NOVEL OF THE FUTURE COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE!

STARTLING STORIES

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THE WORLD WITHOUT

A Hall of Fame Novelet

By BENSON HERBERT

FEATURING

THE KID FROM MARS

Complete Book-Length Novel of Tomorrow's Vanguard

By OSCAR J. FRIEND

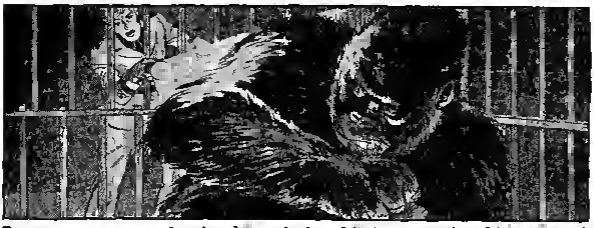
A THRILLING PUBLICATION

THE 500 POUND MONSTER GRABBED ME IN THE DARK!

A True Experience of Richard Kroener, Keeper of Gargantua, mighty gorilla owned by Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus

1. "ONE NIGHT I entered the compartment just outside Gargantua's cage on a routine check-up and forgot for a moment that Gargantua was always waiting to kill me. Suddenly, with crushing force, he grabbed my left shoulder.

2. "ALMOST PARALYZED with horror, I thought the end had come. Then I remembered the flashlight in my right hip pocket. I whipped it out and turned the bright beam full into Gargantua's cruel, glittering eyes.



3. "FOR AN INSTANT he glared into the hated light, then relaxed his grip and lumbered to the other side of the cage. Your dependable 'Eveready' *fresh* DATED batteries saved me from a horrible death that night. I will never be without them."

(Signed) Richard Kroener

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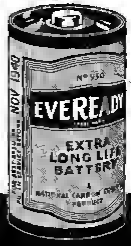

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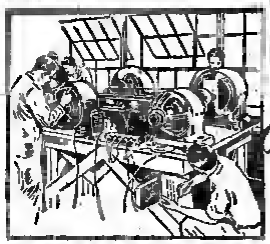

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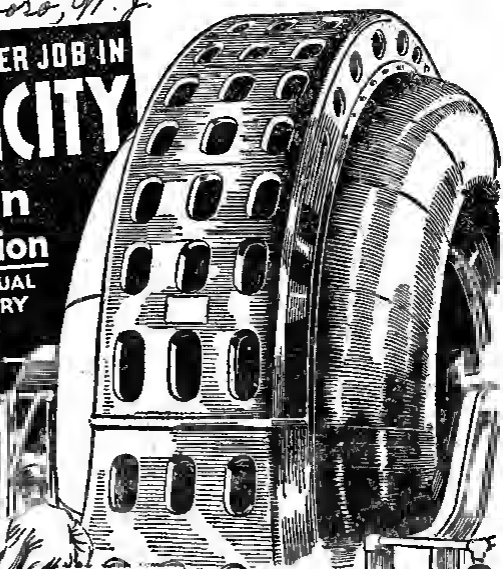

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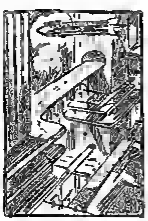
STARTLING STORIES

Vol. 4, No. 2 | CONTENTS | September, 1940

A Complete Book-Length Scientifiction Novel



Cover Painting by E. K. Bergey—Depicting Scene from THE KID FROM MARS

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J. E. SMITH, President
National Radio Institute, Dept. 0109
Washington, D. C.

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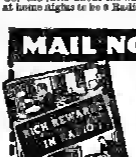

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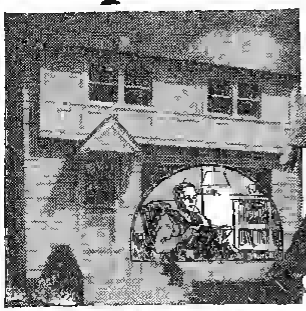

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Home study is an accepted means of getting an education. Following the lead of pioneers like American School, many state and private universities now use this method. *Home study is convenient*—no interference with your present job or earnings. *Home study can be quicker*—you set your own pace, fast where you find "smooth sailing," more slowly and thoroughly where you feel the need. *Home study costs little*—write for details.

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It actually costs LESS—in effort as well as in money—to GET an education than to try to manage without it. Training "pays off" in CASH, as Government figures show. Graduates of American School, Chicago, have been PROVING this for over 40 years. Send for details.

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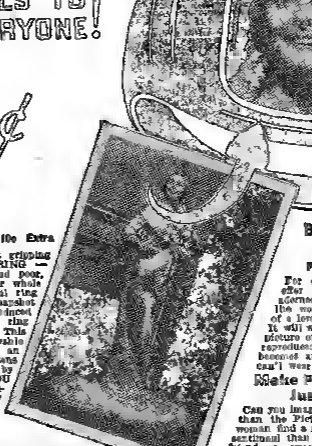

It's here! The hottest, most sensational, most gripping selling idea of the age! THE PICTURE RING — the ring men and women everywhere rich and poor, young and old want to wear and keep their whole lives long. Why? Because on this beautiful ring is permanently reproduced any photograph, snapshot or picture of some loved one. Yes — reproduced clearly and sharply and made part of the ring itself so it can't rub off, come off or fade off. This sensational new idea is making an unbelievable hit. Men and women—even those without an hour's selling experience — are taking orders of orders a day and making dollars of profit by the handful. And now is your territory YOU can cash in big, every day, with this amazing sure-fire profit-maker and earn money so easily it will seem more like play than work.

Beautiful Permanent Picture Ring Made From Any Photo or Picture

For only $1.00 retail—look what you offer. A made-to-measure onyx-like ring adorned with the most precious setting in the world—a reproduction of the picture of a loved one. The ring itself can't tarnish. It will wear forever with ordinary care. The picture of the loved one is clearly, sharply reproduced with surprising faithfulness and becomes an inseparable part of the ring. It can't wear off, rub off or fade off.

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Can you imagine a more novel, more unusual gift than the Picture Ring? How can any man or woman find a more beautiful way to express loving sentiment than giving a wife a child a parent, a friend, a sweetheart, a Picture Ring with the donor's portrait expertly reproduced? What a surprise! 10 orders a day is an easy goal—20 orders a day are not too much to expect.

SELLS TO EVERYONE!

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Once women carried pictures of their loved ones in lockets; and men carried them in watch cases. Those days are gone, but the desire to carry the portrait of a loved one is as strong as ever. Not until the amazing secret process for transferring pictures to rings was discovered was it possible to revive this grand old custom and to satisfy the hunger of every human being to express again this grandest of all sentiments. Here mothers and fathers will welcome this opportunity to wear a ring with the most precious setting of all — a picture of their beloved child! How happy every man and woman will be to keep alive the memory of a departed one by carrying with them always right and day this beautiful Picture Ring.

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Never before has anything like this come your way. No competition from agents — no looking for prospects (they are all around you) — no carrying a big stock or putting any money into goods. Simply showing your sample ring a few times a day if you only start with your friends and neighbors, will be enough to give you an endless chain of orders. We cut away all red tape and are ready to send you a SAMPLE RING at sensationally low special wholesale price of only 48c. The minute you take it out of its beautiful Gift Box you are ready to go after the orders. Rush the coupon below for YOUR sample ring NOW! That's all the outfit you need. It will do all your selling for you. And we make it easy for you to obtain this sample ABSOLUTELY FREE OF A PENNY COST under our liberal offer.

SEND NO MONEY!

Hundreds of customers write thus wouldn't take a fortune for their rings if they couldn't get others. $5.00 and even $10.00 would be a small price for the PICTURE RING—but as a special offer we send you the beautiful PICTURE RING made from any photo or picture you send for only 48¢! Don't wait. Rush the coupon at once for the same in ring at our NO RISK plan and see for yourself what a whirl-wind money maker this is for you. ACT RIGHT NOW!

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Enclosed is photo. Please rush my individually made Picture Ring and sterling equipment. Will pay postman the price few cents postage. It is understood that if I am not entirely satisfied I can return ring within 5 days and you will refund my money in full.
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IF you're that man, here's something that will interest you.

Not a magic formula—not a get-rich-quick scheme—but something more substantial, more practical.

Of course, you need something more than just the desire to be an accountant. You've got to pay the price—be willing to study earnestly, thoroughly.

Still, wouldn't it be worth your while to sacrifice some of your leisure in favor of interesting home study—over a comparatively brief period in your life? Always provided that the rewards were good—a salary of $2,000 to $10,000?

An accountant's duties are interesting, varied and of real worth to his employers. He has *standing!*

Do you feel that such things aren't for you? Well, don't be too sure. Very possibly they *can* be!

Why not, like so many before you, investigate LaSalle's modern Problem Method of training for an accountancy position?

Just suppose you were permitted to work in a large accounting house under the personal supervision of an expert accountant. Suppose, with his aid, you studied accounting principles and solved problems day by day—easy ones at first—then the more difficult ones. If you could do this—and if you could turn to him for advice as the problems became complex—soon you'd master them all.

That's the training you follow in principle under the LaSalle Problem Method.

You cover accountancy from the basic Principles right up through Accountancy Systems and Income Tax Procedure. Then you add C. P. A. Training and prepare for the C. P. A. examinations.

As you go along, you absorb the principles of Auditing, Cost Accounting, Business Law, Statistical Control, Organization, Management and Finance.

Your progress is as speedy as you care to make it—depending on your own eagerness to learn and the time you spend in study.

Will recognition come? The only answer, as you know, is that success *does* come to the man who is really *trained*. It's possible your employers will notice your improvement in a very few weeks or months. Indeed, many LaSalle graduates have paid for their training—with increased earnings—before they have completed it! For accountants, who are trained in organization and management, are the executives of the future.

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For your own good, don't put off investigation of *all* the facts. Write for our free 48-page book, "Accountancy, The Profession That Pays." It'll prove that accountancy offers brilliant futures to those who aren't afraid of serious home study. Send us the coupon *now*.

Over 1650 Certified Public Accountants among LaSalle alumni

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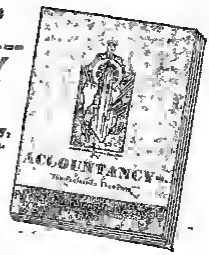
A CORRESPONDENCE INSTITUTION



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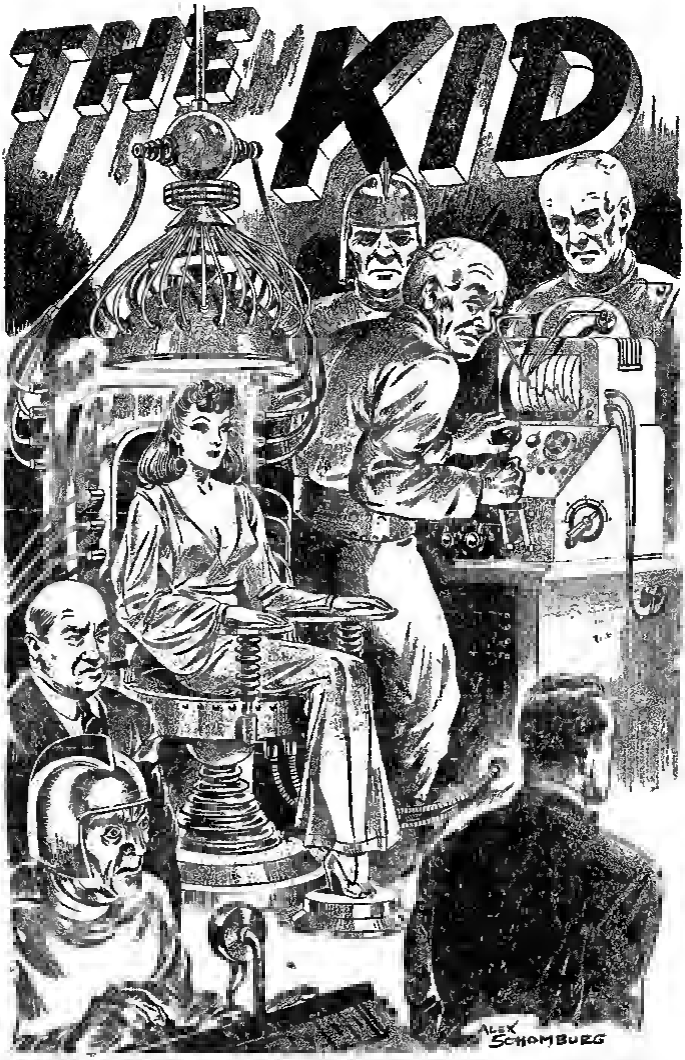
I want to be an accountant. Send me, without cost or obligation, the 48-page book, "Accountancy, The Profession That Pays," and full information about your accountancy training program.

Name _____

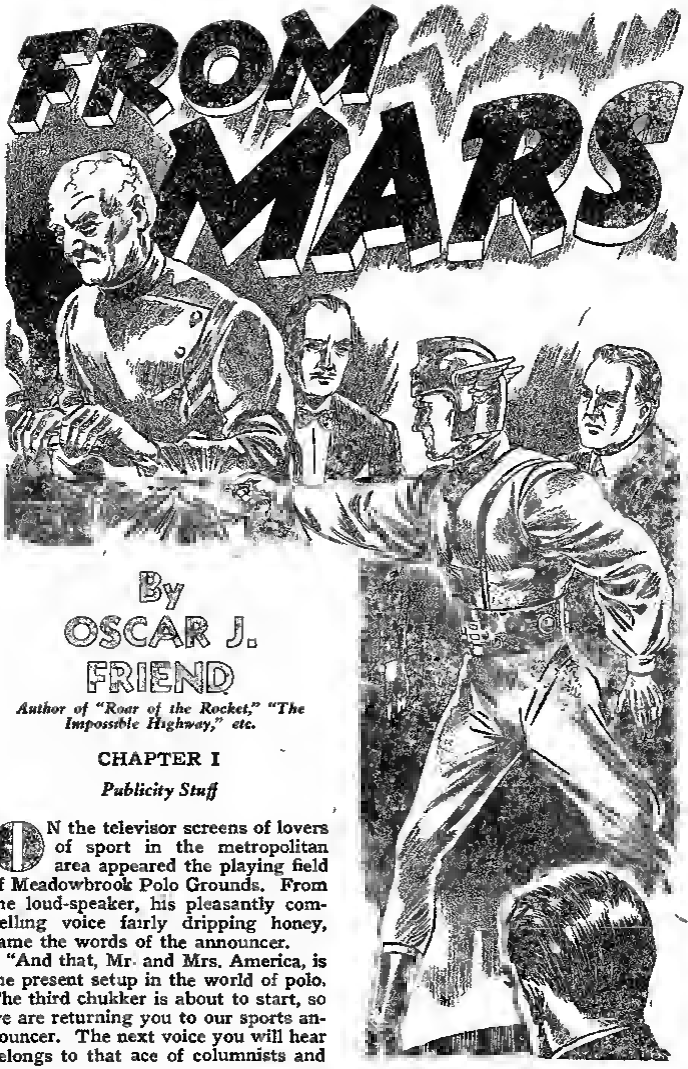
Address _____ *City* _____

Position _____ *Age* _____



"Stop that!" Llamkin shouted at the giant operating the decalculator (Chap XX)

The Visitor from the Crimson World Could



By
OSCAR J.
FRIEND

Author of "Roar of the Rocket," "The Impossible Highway," etc.

CHAPTER I

Publicity Stuff

ON the televisor screens of lovers of sport in the metropolitan area appeared the playing field of Meadowbrook Polo Grounds. From the loud-speaker, his pleasantly compelling voice fairly dripping honey, came the words of the announcer.

"And that, Mr. and Mrs. America, is the present setup in the world of polo. The third chukker is about to start, so we are returning you to our sports announcer. The next voice you will hear belongs to that ace of columnists and

Perform Miracles—but They Weren't for Sale!

sports reporters, Mr. Louis Shayne.

"This championship match is coming to you through the courteay of Rainbow Slumber Vitamin Pellets—R.S.V.P. — that marvelous concentrate which relaxes, reposes, and replenisbes your mind and body, all at the same time. Take one nutritious, iridescent pellet upon retiring, and see your dreams in technicolor. Ladies and gentlemen—Mr. Shayne!"

Louia Shayne, lean and wiry, almost angular, casually shrugged his tailored shoulders and stepped from the side of the nearby spectator box. He approached the telecaster equipment, deliberately turning his back upon the brunette beauty that was Elaine Elliot, Three Dimensional Pictures' glamor girl. There were a number of otber big shots in the cinema star's company, but that didn't bother Shayne, either.

He had rubbed shoulders witb the great and the near-great until all his illusions were tarnished. He had exploited so many punks and palookas on the air and in his column that he didn't believe in anything. He was bored and fed up with public glitter stuff, platitudinous advertising, and phony buildups. In sbort, Mr. Shayne had worn a hole in his cheek, and his tongue waa sore. Three Dimensional Pictures waa just another exploitation.

A fat little man, Maurice Rynder, first vice-president of Three Dimensional Pictures, trotted alongside the natty reporter.

"*Ps-s-s-t*, Shayne!" he bissed, tugging at the younger man's sleeve. "Don't forget to pour it on thick—about Elaine, you know."

"Yeah," Shayne grunted laconically witbout looking back. "I know."

He certainly did. In the box with the star sat John Hartman, owner and publisher of the *Star-Tribune* Newspaper and Telecast System. Next to Hartman sat Colonel Henry Thomlinson, financial wizard of Wall Street, international banker, and the one man who had all ten fingers on the official pulse at Washington. There was this little blimp, Rynder, who had tagged after him, a big noise in the newly developing three - dimensional picture company.

But it was John Hartman who could successfully holler "frog" at Shayne and get a resultant bop. All three had money invested in Three Dimensional Pictures, but Hartman alone waa Shayne'a boss.

"And tbat makes me the goat again," Shayne observed to himself in great irony. "I ladle out a lot of boloney about Elaine Elliot, whose real name is probably Mamie Schultz and who doesn't know what it's all about, anyhow. But she's a swell looker and can memorize double talk and people will pay to see her and figbt for her autograph."

SHAYNE did Miss Elaine Elliot a grave injustice, but be wasn't aware of it. Elaine, besides being a beautiful young actress, was from Missouri and knew a lot more than any pretty girl was supposed to know. She was more sick of hokum and tinsel and publicity gags than Louis Shayne could ever hope to be. But tbere was a subtle difference between them. Where Shayne was cynical, Miss Elliot was blasé. Where Shayne waa disgusted, Miss Elliot was annoyed and alertly suspicious.

Shayne stepped in front of the oscillators and addressed the mike. As he spoke, he let his weary gaze wander over the scene before him.

"It's a beautiful day, sport fans," he aaid in his crisp, dry style of delivery. "There isn't a cloud in the aky—except that one gray speck directly overhead, which I mentioned before. The game at the end of the second chukker put tbe South American team in the lead, as I told you. That last-minute goal by DeVry was a beauty. That Brazilian centaur is a aeven-goal wizard if there ever was one. And there they go galloping out onto the field.

"The stands are crowded, color and style everywhere. Many well known people are bere, friends. In the box on my right sits none other than that sensational beauty, Elaine Elliot, that gorgeous and glamorous girl from Mis-

souri who is taking America by storm in Three Dimensional Pictures. Perhaps I can get her to the telecaster when the game is over. Anyway, we will get a good shot of her presenting the silver cup to the winning team.

"But back to the game! Did you see that long shot? That was Paul Morton, star of the American team. That powerful back-handed swing looks like a sure— No! That demon of the pampas, Jeffery DeVry, neatly blocks that shot and— Boy, what a splendid underhand return he makes! Both teams

are in a sweet mêleé in the middle of the field. Looks like the Brazilians might break through with another try at— What the devil? Hold tight, folks! Something is happening that isn't as per schedule.

"That cloud isn't a cloud at all! It's —it's a dirigible! No, it isn't. It's a stratosphere ship of some kind, all enclosed, like a cigar in celophane, gray and shiny. It's settling in the very center of the field. It'll be in your line of vision in half a second. It's stopped the game! The players are galloping madly out of the way to save their necks!

"What the hell? Pardon me, friends and censors, but this is crazy. Listen to that thunder. It was a keel rocket blast. Hear the people screaming and shouting? My God, what a spectacle! Nobody's hurt—just mob hysteria. Grab your chairs and watch for yourselves while I go out on that field and see what this is all about. Here, Jack. Keep this equipment in focus."

SHAYNE vaulted out of the stand and started running toward the center of the polo field. Recovering from their amazement at the thunder and roar of blasting rockets, which had ruined polo playing for the day on this field, a few others followed him. Only Elaine Elliot turned accusing eyes on fat little Mr. Rynder.

"What's this, Maurice?" she asked in a savage whisper. "Another publicity stunt of yours?"

"A stunt of mine?" ejaculated the cinema vice-president, his eyes bulging. "You know we ain't got any airships like that, Elaine. I never saw one before. You tell her, Mr. Hartman."

John Hartman, big and massive and piercing of eye, was studying the cause of the uproar with narrowed eyes.

"A genuine stratosphere vessel of some kind," he stated tersely. "Streamlined—crystal observation ports—rockets— By Jove, it has an air-lock! A rocket ship with an air-lock. That machine has come from Europe as sure as we're a foot high. There's nothing like it in America, Thomlinson, or I'd have known of it. But what made the fool set her down in the middle of this polo field?"

"I still think it's a gag," asserted Miss Elliot, crossing the legs which were destined to make millions for Three Dimensional. She glanced suspiciously from her companions to the center of the field.

"I'd bet money on it," agreed Henry Thomlinson in his deep bass voice as he stroked his thin and ascetic face with long, tapering fingers. "I also suspect Hartman and Rynder, Elaine. But it's an expensive stunt. Somebody will have to refund all the money and repair this field. I wouldn't be sur-

prised if that pilot sleeps in jail tonight."

Unware of this discussion—he would have been skeptical had he heard it—Louis Shayne pushed his way through the gathering circle of people and indignant polo players. He surveyed the queer ship with shrewdly appraising eyes.

He hadn't had time to describe the spectacular landing to his televisor audience. The wingless ship had been hovering far above like a motionless cloud. Suddenly spiraling down like a silent hornet, it was maneuvered with speed and flexibility that were little short of marvelous.

It had hovered above the center of the field like a humming bird at the lip of a flower while the frightened polo players scattered out of the way. Then it had settled its tubular length on the ground as lightly as a feather. It's only noise and damage came from that one bluish-yellow flare of keel rockets.

There was no doubt in Shayne's eyes that this was a remarkable piece of aerial equipment. It compared with the most advanced aircraft of the day as modern aircraft compared with primitive ox-carts. Despite its size and obvious weight—it must have been fully a hundred feet long and thirty feet in diameter—it had handled as beautifully as a darting swallow.

There were no signs of military armament about the solid, sleek sides of the craft. But there was no telling what sort of equipment, lethal or otherwise, might be housed within that rounded, tapering hull of gray metal.

SHAYNE heard the faint whine of machinery from within the satiny hull. A circular port in the belly of the ship, just below the blunt nose and forward of the keel, slowly opened to reveal what could only be an air-lock. It was like the opening of the massive door to one of Colonel Thomlinson's bank vaults. A tubular, skeletal framework of metal steps cranked out, and a man boldly stepped upon the still smoking ground.

But what a fantastic man! Fully two inches taller than six feet, broad-shouldered and rangy, he made Louis Shayne—who was no midget—feel like one. Upon his head was a close-fitting metal helmet that shone in the afternoon sun like burnished gold. It was rakish and becoming, with a pair of wings like those of Hermes, plus a pair of earphones.

That was only starting at the top. He wore a blouse which fitted snugly at wrist and waist and molded his muscular torso beautifully. His trousers fitted him like an exaggerated pair of riding breeches. His feet were encased in a pair of glittering boots that looked exactly like flexible glass. Around his waist was a sort of harness with studs and buttons, like an instrument panel.

"Good lord!" muttered Shayne. "What an outfit! Rainbow Pellets in person. Now who the hell thought up this stunt?"

The stranger played it straight. He had rugged but nice looking features, and keen blue eyes which he permitted to sweep over the gathering crowd soberly. Then he bowed solemnly and addressed himself to Shayne, although he included everybody within hearing.

"Greetings, my friends," he said in a resonant, mellow voice which had the exquisite diction and ring of a fireside chat. But his expression was dead-pan and his bearing solemn as a judge pronouncing sentence as he went on. "From the people of Xzorculu to the inhabitants of Earth, I bring salutations."

A few of the quick-witted listeners caught the intonations of his voice and promptly began laughing. He raised his eyebrows slightly and glanced around in a seriously questioning manner but without embarrassment or annoyance. He seemed to be studying and tabulating the facial expressions of mirth about him. Expectantly he turned back toward Shayne.

"Xzork-yew-loo?" repeated the sports reporter phonetically. "What's that? A new breakfast food?"

"I beg your pardon," answered the stranger politely. "I do not comprehend you. Xzorculu is the fourth planet in this Solar System. It is known to your astronomers as Mars"

"I get it," said Shayne wearily. "Candy. At first I thought it was Rainbow Pellets. Your company believes

in doing things in a big way. You're dolled up foxier than the Beechnut girls."

"Candy? Rainbow Pellets? Beechnut girls?" Puzzled, the stranger's fine blue eyes centered upon the reporter's ironic face. "I don't perceive your meaning, but you cannot be jesting. You are not mirthful, like these others."

"You said it, brother. It takes Weber and Fields to make me laugh, and you know where they are. Your firm isn't going to laugh, either, when they find out how much this stunt of yours is going to cost them."

Obviously they were getting nowhere. Louis Shayne waited patiently.

"But you don't seem to understand," protested the other. "I admit I cannot follow you. I just informed you that I have come to Earth from Mars on a special mission—and in all friendship."

An irate polo official, flanked by two uniformed police officers, came hustling through the crowd. He angrily confronted the tall stranger in the burnished helmet.

A couple of the polo players dismounted and were pushing forward, swinging their mallets grimly.

"You've ruined this field!" stormed the official. "You've broken up this championship match. What the hell do you think you're doing? Who do you think you are? This is no airport!"

"Oh, I'm sorry," said the stranger. "I had no idea you people of Earth took your play so seriously. I will remedy that at once."

CHAPTER II

Llamkin's Mission

HE touched a stud at his belt and deftly twisted a dial. Instantly there sounded the hum of machinery from within his queer craft. The skeletal steps withdrew. The heavy circular port swung shut.

"Please stand back!" he cried in a

ringing, carrying voice. "There will be no rocket blast. But it would be a calamity if anybody were injured because of my—"

"Not so fast, buddy!" rasped the nearer of the two policemen. "Who's operating that dirigible? Who did you talk to over that radio outfit you're wearing? Let's see your license."

Before the accused could answer, there was a silent rush of air. The gray ship seemed to leap from the ground, giving Shayne the dizzy impression that it was falling away from Earth. It shot straight upward, dwindled rapidly to the size of a prism crystal and then simply winked out of being.

"There's no one aboard my vessel. I merely sent it up into the stratosphere by remote control." He touched his belt and then frowned at the parched, honeycombed ground. "I did spoil the playing field somewhat, didn't I? Forgive me."

The grounds official became inarticulate. One of the policemen laughed curtly.

"That ship's no dirigible," said one of the halted polo players, catching Shayne by the arm. "I know something about aviation, and that craft was a heavier-than-air machine, with some new sort of motive power."

"The guy's crazy!" The field offi-

cial finally found his voice. "Arrest him!"

Shayne pulled out of his daze.

"Hold on!" he snapped. "This is screwy as hell, but you needn't get tough because a guy pulls a gag like this for publicity. He was only obeying orders. His sponsors will pay for all the damage, of course. All right, my futuristic friend, drop the act and start talking. What's all this about?"

The man in the weird garb shook his head in bewilderment.

"This situation is beyond me. And I was rated highly on Xzorculu in my knowledge of Earthmen."

"Okay, Flash Gordon," said Shayne. "Let's go over to the office and straighten out this business."

"Gladly," agreed the other. "But what did you call me? We discarded the system of personal names a thousand tenarcks—years—ago on Xzorculu. I am legally known as X-two-three-Z-four-seven-nine-eight-nine. That's as close as I can translate Xzorculuan digits to your Arabic numerals. However, I am known to my intimates as Llamkin, an archaic family name."

Shayne almost choked on that one. "Lambkin huh? Lambkin—kid, for short, and you're certainly a kidder. The Kid from Mars, with a social security number as long as my arm. Well, come on, my lamb, let's go kid the Meadowbrook moguls, the cops, and the Federal aviation authorities out of this rap."

WITH a curious crowd trooping after them, Shayne led his bizarre companion off the field. Closely flanking them were Bixby, the grounds official, and the two grim-jawed policemen. It didn't prove necessary to go to the club office. Several officials were gathered in front of the Thomlinson box, and Hartman beckoned to his ace reporter.

Shayne made one more effort to give some good advice.

"Better drop your Mars role, brother. That's my big boss, and he doesn't care for clowning in private. The thin, white-haired gent with him is Colonel Thomlinson—as if you don't know. He's the biggest national colonel in civilian life you'll ever meet."

"Thank you," said Llamkin in some perplexity. "I thought I understood the thought processes of your civilization fairly well. Now I am inclined to believe I have much to learn."

"Bull!" retorted Shayne.

"A male ruminant quadruped of Earth," Llamkin responded promptly. "Used for certain primitive types of work, for food, and the hides for a barbarous material called leather. But you will shortly pass out of that crude era. You are now entering the stage of plastics."

Shayne surveyed him through narrowed eyes. The face of the man from Xzorculu was innocent of guile.

They halted in front of the box. With the heated assistance of Mr. Bixby, Shayne gave a brief account of the matter. When they turned to the cause of the disturbance, they were amazed to see him standing before the box. His muscular, sinewy, bronzed hands were gripping the railing as he stared reverently at the eye-filling Miss Elaine Elliot. Elaine, calloused to the idolatry of thousands, was undergoing the optical treatment with admirable equanimity.

"You!" said Colonel Thomlinson in his deep voice. "The gentleman from Mars. I say there."

But the gentleman from Mars was lost on Venus. A queer look had come into his intensely blue eyes. His lips parted, and he began speaking, almost chanting in lyric prose.

"Beauty congealed in living flesh," he said. "That intangible essence so lightly imprisoned in the heart of the Queekas flower of the Burning Desert. Hair as black and sleek as the fur of the fabulous Chee-Chee bird. Eyes that gleam in black softness like the Kolsord blossoms along the banks of the Great Znarotl Canal. At last do I behold womanly beauty such as has vanished from the entire world of Xzorculu these five hundred tenarcks. Earth maiden, what is your name?"

"Say, listen, Shelley," began Shayne. "I've already admitted you've got a good act. But snap out of it now and talk sense. This is serious, and it's going to cost somebody plenty."

"What language!" exclaimed Maurice Rynder rapturously. "You should be a press agent instead of even such a glorified sandwich man. I pay men a thousand dollars a week who can't sling adjectives like that."

"And not one of them has anything to do with a ruined polo field and a postponed championship match," said Colonel Thomlinson dryly. "Come, man, before these officers cart you off to jail. Who are you? What are you advertising?"

THE blue-eyed stranger came to himself with a start as Shayne nudged him. The fervent glow faded from his eyes.

He bowed politely.

"My name is Llamkin. I come to Earth from the planet you Earthmen call Mars. My mission is a peaceful one, but of vital importance to my own world. I ask that you call a conference of your men of science so I can explain my quest and ask for desperately needed assistance. Xzorculu has lost a precious ingredient without which it is doomed to perish. The people of Mars have lost something which they must regain. You Earthlings have that secret in great abundance despite your many other faults and failings."

"See?" said Shayne to Hartman with a shrug. "Nutty as a pecan grove. So hoked up, it smells to heaven."

"Just what is this lost ingredient?" demanded Hartman.

Louis Shayne groaned. It was just a matter of time before the phony blundered.

"It is difficult to put into words," said Llamkin slowly. "For want of a better description I must call it—call it a—a sense of humor."

"What?" shouted Thomlinson, scarcely audible above the sudden roar of laughter.

"There!" cried Llamkin helplessly, indicating the grinning faces all about. "That is it. I—I can't explain it. In fact, it seems idiotic to me. But the most brilliant scientists of Xzorrulu concur in the opinion that—that this humor, which we do not understand, is the vital catalyst needed so terribly on our dying planet. I cannot explain here. It will take time for me to put into words of your language the meaning for which I am groping."

"What the hell has this nonsense to do with polo?" demanded Bixby. "Ten thousand people here—the cream of the Social Register—and we are subjected to an exhibition like a balloon ascension at a county fair. I demand the arrest of this man at once and the filing of suit against the company which sponsored this outrage!"

"Just a minute, Bixby," said Colonel Thomlinson. He turned to Llamkin. "You claim to be from Mars. Are you denying that you are a human being?"

Llamkin pondered the question.

"I see and feel the atmosphere of incredulousness about me. I find it inexplicable. To answer your query—I am cell for cell a replica of yourselves. If by human being you mean a native of Earth, I am not human. But surely you know that the energy concept we call life follows a definite pattern. Just as there are only so many elements in the entire Universe, which are universally distributed, so are the spores of life. In our own Solar System, three planets offered something like the same general living conditions—Venus, Earth, and Mars.

"Venus has just put the reptilian age behind her. Earth is in lusty childhood. Mars—poor Xzorculu—is facing senility. There are other forms of life on our sister planets, but they have developed in fashions beyond our ken. Xzorculuan scientists have long studied the mysteries of space through their radio-telescopes. Later, we will gladly put our greater knowledge at your disposal. But now we have come to you for aid."

John Hartman jerked his head for Shayne to follow him around to the back of the box. The reporter hastened to meet him.

"Shayne," said the publisher in swift, sharp tones. "That fellow may be a crackpot as you suggested. But, lunatic or not, he'a got something tremendous in that stratosphere craft. If it's only half as good as it looked today, we've got to keep that invention in America."

"Yes, sir, but the setup smells high

to me," said the cynical reporter. "You know, Mr. Hartman, we've seen some mighty slick stunts pulled in our time. I've even thrown a few curves myself when—"

"This is no curve!" snapped Hartman. "This is an order! You get back there and take that nut under your wing, understand? Freeze to him tighter than his own skin. I'll get him out of this mess. But you hang onto him until we can get hold of the plans of that rocket ship or whatever it is."

CHAPTER III

Men Working

LOUIS SHAYNE should have been hardened to such assignments. He found he wasn't.

"But if he keeps up this Kid from Mars stuff I'll go batty," he protested. "Why, that guy's liable to want to flood the subways with sea-water just to see if the cars can swim. If he's turned loose in Manhattan in that goofy garb he might—"

"Get him out of those slapstick clothes. Promise him anything he wants. Tell him we'll call a meeting of every scientist in the world and stage the party at Lake Geneva. I don't give a damn what you promise him. But stick to him until we get hold of that ship. And I don't want anybody else to beat me to it. Understand?"

"Yes, sir," said Shayne. His eyes went disgustedly out of focus. Hartman might not have liked that look if he had not been too busy to notice it.

"All right. Get around there and collar that freak. I'll talk things over when we have more time."

The publisher went back to the box while the sports reporter hastened around to the front. Bixby was raising his voice in renewed demand for legal reprisals. Hartman thrust forward to the railing and held up his hand.

"The farce has gone far enough," he called out in a clear, curt voice. "Can't you understand, Mr Bixby? The fame of Elaine Elliot's beauty has traveled so far that Mr. Lamb—er—Mr. Kid has come down from Mars to see her in person. Didn't you hear him eulogize over her?"

Bixby's mouth gaped. Maurice Rynder shuddered slightly in relief and then relaxed with a sigh.

"You—you mean—this is just a publicity stunt?" blurted the club official.

"I wouldn't say it was a publicity stunt," reproved Hartman quickly. "I said the gentleman from Mars came all the way to see Miss Elliot. In recognition of his ardor, Three Dimensional Pictures will gladly guarantee indemnity for all damages. You have my pledged word, Mr. Bixby."

Bixby bloomed like a morning glory under the early Sun, but Rynder uttered a yelp. Colonel Thomlinson looked along his thin nose at the publisher and kept his own counsel.

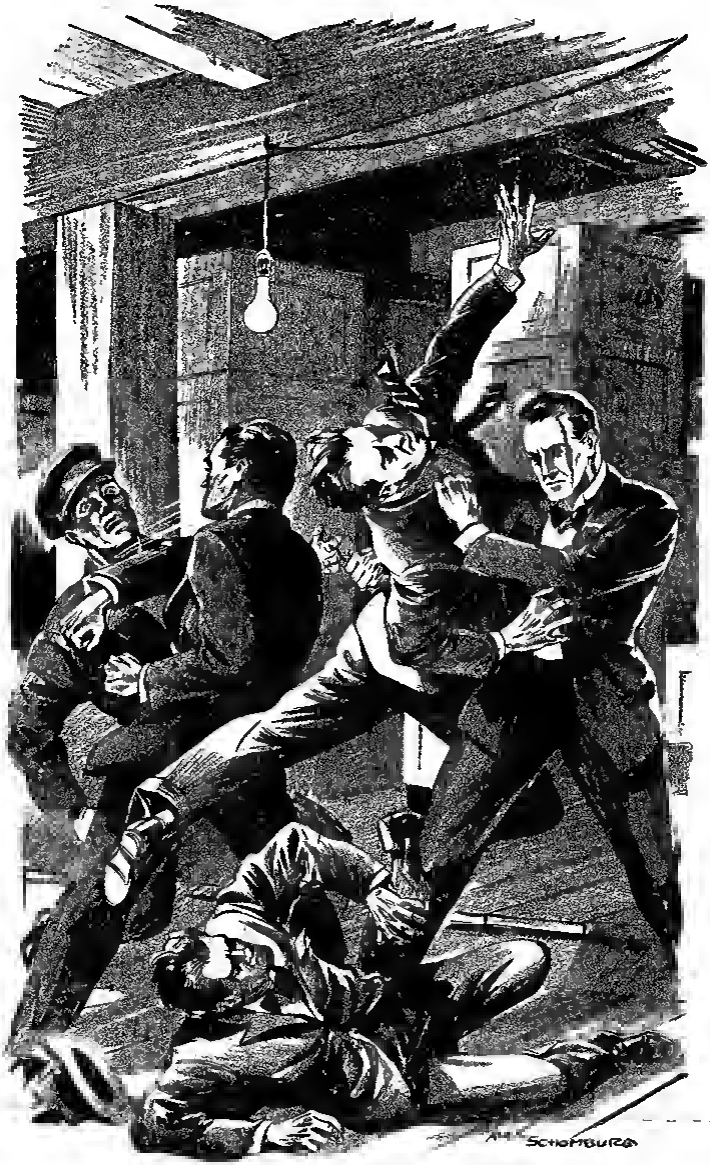
Louis Shayne, for once undecided whether to laugh, sneer, or cheer, took his cue from his big boss. He yelled for the televisor equipment to be focused for a closeup at the box. He leaped in front of the oscillators and began talking in rapid-fire sentences.

"The greatest event of the age, folks! That stratosphere ship was none other than the private liner of Lambkin, the Kid from Mars— Yes, Mars! Mr. Lambkin came forty million miles to lay his heart at the feet of Miss Elaine Elliot, the star of Three Dimensional Pictures, the only star for the Kid from Mars! Just a minute, folks. I'll have Lambkin address you while your screens pick up a close shot. Have you got a surprise coming!"

HE left the microphone and hurried over to grasp Llamkin by the arm. The man from Xzorculu was once more gripping the box railing and staring in fascination at the face of Elaine Elliot.

"Elaine," he murmured softly. "Elaine! I like that name."

Miss Elliot sighed, like a bewitched person coming out of a spell. She gazed at the fantastically attired Llamkin. A cold little smile froze her lips as she withdrew behind her case-hardened exterior shell. But there was a faint shadow of regret lurking in her



Llamkin tore into his kidnapers like a man gone berserk (Chap. XIV)

great black eyes. She sighed.

"So it was a gag after all," she stated through her set teeth at the slowly recuperating Mr. Rynder. "There are times, Maurice, when I actually hate you."

"Elaine," began the vice-president weakly. "I'll swear—"

"And a very clever gag it is," cut in the firm voice of John Hartman. "I congratulate you, Rynder. I didn't think it would work at first, but I'll have to admit it's the best publicity stunt you've ever pulled. This will send Three Dimensional stock soaring." Then, *sotto voce:* "Play it up, you fool!"

All of it was incomprehensible to the man from Mars. Llamkin became aware of the insistent tugging at his arm. He whirled around so quickly that he almost upset the sports reporter.

"Oh!" he said. "It is you. Do you realize that you haven't even told me who you are?"

"Just call me Louis," said Shayne, adjusting himself to the vibrant strength he had felt surging through the other's frame. "We're practically going to be cellmates in the same asylum. Come on over to the telecaster and speak a few words to your public. At least ten million people are looking and listening in. Give them that welcome speech and that peroration on Elaine."

Llamkin nodded in quick understanding, but he suffered himself to be led from the presence of Elaine Elliot with obvious reluctance.

* * * * *

AMONG the crowd that milled about the ruined polo field, stood a man named Dr. Percival Folkstone. He had watched the strange airship through a pair of powerful binoculars until it had disappeared out of sight in the blue. The curious crowd trooped after the garish principal in this queer little drama. But Dr. Folkstone returned his glasses to the smart black leather carrying-case and walked briskly off the field.

Nobody observed his maneuver, although Dr. Folkstone was worthy of notice. He was tall, blond, with light blue eyes, a crisp little Vandyke which made one think instinctively of professional Vienna. He was dressed in the height of fashion. Nor was it amazing for Dr. Folkstone to be carrying such magnificent binoculars. For Dr. Folkstone was a highly successful optometrist, and lenses were his mania.

Eminent, impeccable, thoroughly successful, Dr. Folkstone catered to the wealthiest and most influential people. He was not a sportsman in the accepted sense of the word, but he had a hobby. This was, oddly enough, aviation. He shared this hobby with Ed Caroll, his valet and chauffeur, a red-faced ex-sergeant of the U. S. Army air force.

He found Caroll standing beside the limousine in the parking area beyond the grandstand. No one else was around.

Caroll was gazing up at the sky, scratching his chin thoughtfully.

"So you saw it, too," Folkstone remarked.

"Yes, sir," his chauffeur replied. "It looked like one of those Goodrich dirigibles, only different."

"It was different," said Folkstone, getting into his car. "LaGuardia Field, as quickly as possible."

Within the hour the limousine drew up at the airport.

"Going up this afternoon, Dr. Folkstone?" asked an attendant.

The two men had walked swiftly to the hangar where the doctor kept his low-wing, sealed-cabin monoplane.

"Right, at once," Folkstone replied. "Check the oxygen equipment, Caroll."

Not a word of astonishment nor the slightest look of surprise was exhibited by his chauffeur. In a few minutes he had the huge radial twin motors of the metal plane warming up. Folkstone joined him, taking the co-pilot's seat. Both men clad themselves in heavy, fur-lined suits.

"Take her up," directed Folkstone, adjusting his earphones and oxygen mask. "Altitude."

The motors revved up into a sweet roar of power. The plane rolled majestically down the field at the takeoff

instruction coming from the loudspeaker. The pilot banked the plane in a wide spiral. Dr. Folkstone flipped a switch and cut off communication with the ground.

"Now, Caroll," he ordered. He opened a compartment and began assembling a small telescope. "If the pilot of that ship is obeying orders, the ship we want to see is cruising around high above the Meadowbrook field. Find it."

"Easy, Doctor," said Caroll confidently. "There ain't a plane in the East that has the ceiling this baby has. We darn near broke the English altitude record, fifty-four thousand, a month ago."

the altimeter! We're at fifty-two thousand now, practically our ceiling. Can't you feel that? Listen to our motors. Look at the ice forming. You're breathing almost straight oxygen."

The fashionable optometrist uttered an exclamation as he took the small telescope from his eye and glanced at the instrument panel.

"*Grosse Gott!* It's impossible!"

OH, I don't know," returned Caroll. His attention was centered on the piloting of his own ship, depriving him of the telescope and the opportunity for close observation. "That Picard guy from Switzerland want pretty high in his balloon."

"We may have to break it today," Folkstone replied grimly. "That ship definitely has something valuable."

"I'll find it if it's even close to Long Island," promised Caroll.

CAROLL proved correct, but they didn't examine the odd craft which had landed Llamkin. Late in the afternoon, at an altitude of fifty thousand feet, Dr. Folkstone sighted the gray cigar-shaped vessel—fully two miles above them! He pointed it out to his companion.

"There she is," he said. "Climb."

The pilot's voice choked with astonishment in the doctor's earphones.

"What d'you mean—climb? Look at

"That ship is no dirigible!" snapped Folkstone. "It's a heavier-than-air machine. I saw it on the field. It has some marvelous new method of propulsion. And, *Gott*, it isn't moving at all!"

"Helicopters?" suggested Caroll.

"There is nothing but that streamlined hull!" growled the doctor angrily. "Here, you take a look while I nurse more altitude out of this ship."

Caroll focused the telescope and stared. Folkstone used all his considerable skill to spiral the specially built monoplane higher. It was no use. Fully ten thousand feet above them, serenely indifferent to the metal hornet buzzing futilely below it, the queer

stratosphere ship hung poised. It seemed glued up there.

"Gott, Gott, Gott!" moaned Dr. Folkstone in angry despair.

He studied the belly and sides of the sleek vessel through his telescope while Caroll fought to jockey upward a few hundred more feet.

"Fifty-five thousand is the top," he announced finally. "It's no use. There ain't any heavier-than-air machine that'll do it. And the word, in America, is 'God'."

"Descend," said Folkstone reluctantly. "We have business to attend to."

CHAPTER IV

A Gag Explodes

AT TEN o'clock that night, Dr. Folkstone was seated in the bare back office of a huge warehouse which extended out to the jaws of a U-shaped wharf. This was the headquarters of the Mammoth Mercantile Importing Company, on East River.

Opposite the optometrist sat a stocky, grizzled man with a benevolent face that didn't match his gimlet eyes at all. Mr. George Crown, head of the company, had once been know as *Herr Hauptmann* George Kranz. But that was long ago and far away. Mr. Crown was now a loyal, naturalized, flag-waving American who apparently viewed the Bund, Communism and Fascism with manifest horror.

"I tell you, Crown, this thing is im-immense!" Dr. Folkstone was saying "Caroll and I couldn't get within ten thousand feet of it. With such a weapon we can subjugate the whole world. I described the ship to you as thoroughly as I could."

"I believe you, Doctor," nodded the heavy-set listener. "You could not tell whether this man Lambschen represents a European inventor, or whether he himself is the inventor?"

"I could not. I didn't linger to follow him. I went to check on the ship."

Crown nodded again. "I think you did right. But we must contact this Lambschen at once. I rely on your aeronautical judgment. We must get that ship for our homeland. These *verdammte* Americans change their construction plans so rapidly, it is useless to steal blueprints. They order a hundred ships from a test ship, and then demand important changes before the first contract ship is built."

"There won't be any sudden changes in this ship," declared Folkstone. "And it isn't American, I know. Should I contact this Lamhkin and make him an offer?"

"And expose yourself? *Nein.* Besides, this may be some insane advertising scheme, after all. These crazy Americans! I will set things in motion. You watch Colonel Thomlinson. If he shows an interest, we will know it is good. And then we will strike!"

"But suppose Lambkin has already made a deal?"

Crown smiled. His jovial face was momentarily transformed into a lethal mask.

"Leave that to me, my friend. This Lambschen will never deliver."

"How high dare we bid?"

"Bid? Who said anything about bidding? At the right time, Lambschen will give his wonder ship—and his life—freely to our cause. Go now and put Thomlinson under strict surveillance."

CHARLES J. KEENE, president of Rainbow Pellets, Inc., was in a high rage, though it was almost midnight. The directors' room on the top floor of the Rainbow plant in Queens was ablaze with light. As he pounded on the end of the massive conference table, half a dozen white-faced yea-men looked and listened timidly.

Mr. Keene was indeed something for the eyes and ears. Clean-shaven and red of face, heavy of jowl and paunch, bald on top and fringed with gray at the timber line, nevertheless he trotted his avoirdupois around with bovine dignity.

"Bah!" he roared, banging his fist. "What kind of associates do I have around me? I pay you the highest salaries you ever received in your lives, and what do you do? You sit around and let the greatest sensation of the

year get up and walk away right under your parosmiacal noses!"

"But, C. J.," hesitantly offered Putnam, the vice-president. He was a thin little man with a long nose which had often been accused of a distortion of the sense of smell. "How was Grosset to know that—"

"Shut up!" snapped Keene. "If you had been out there at Meadowbrook this afternoon, you wouldn't even have seen this Lambkin landing on the field in his ship."

"But, C. J.," protested Putnam, twitching his proboscis nervously, "perhaps there is something to that stratosphere ship, after all. Maybe, there's—"

"Damn the ship!" roared Keene, banging the table again. "Let the U. S. War Department worry about it. Our business is promoting Rainbow Slumber Vitamin Pellets. That was a natural we didn't even have sense enough to take advantage of. Grosset, I pay you thirty thousand dollars a year for publicity and advertising, and you let the stunt of the century get away from you! Why, I—"

Grosset, head of the advertising department, a sleek looking gentleman in his forties, shivered and braved the lightning.

"But it all happened so suddenly. How was I to know who was sponsoring that stunt? How could I tell just what—"

"What difference does it make who put on that show? That was our broadcast, wasn't it? You were supposed to be in charge of it, weren't you? It costs us five thousand dollars each time we telecast one of those sporting events. And what did you do? You let John Hartman and Maurice Rynder grab off the glory for Three Dimensional Pictures! Five million people on the tele-screens, and you let all that build-up go to a new-fangled picture venture—and on our time! By tomorrow it will be flashed all over the country, and we don't get a dime's worth of publicity out of it."

"But Lamkin claimed he was from Mars! He disclaimed any sponsors behind his publicity stunt. I wasn't sure of anything for awhile."

Bang went the huge presidential fist. "I'm beginning to think you never are, Grosset. You let that sports announcer, Shayne, use the whole show for that picture concern Hartman is in up to his neck. I hope he loses his shirt! If this fellow disclaimed all sponsors that was all the more reason for grabbing him for Rainbow Pellets. That's what I called this meeting for.

"Every one of you get busy right now and push advertising. Get out news flashes, lithographed posters—everything. Twist this sensation to the glory of R.S.V.P. Grosset, if you want to hold your job, get hold of this Lamkin fellow at once and sign him up for us. Get him away from that pirate, Hartman, and bring him into our fold."

"But how?"

"I don't give a damn how! Kidnap him, choke him, bribe him, steal him! But get him. Kill all that Three Dimensional stuff the minute you land him. I'll sue John Hartman and his picture concern in every court in the land! I'll teach him to steal Rainbow glory!"

"But, Mr. Keene, suppose Llamkin is really backed by some advertising firm! Suppose—"

"Suppose hell! What if he is? They've got a suit against Three Dimensional themselves. Find out who it is and buy 'em off. Get that? Pay 'em their price and get out of the picture quick! This publicity is worth millions—millions to us, and you let it slide through your butter-fingers! Now, get out of here and repair that damage."

"You are giving me carte blanche?" asked Grosset hesitantly.

"More than that," roared Keene. "I'm giving you the sack if you don't make good. Putnam, take that twitchy long nose of yours along and see that Grosset does a good job. Corner this Lambkin fellow. Call me if you can't handle him, and I'll do the job personally."

IN the living room of Elaine Elliot's penthouse suite at the Telecast Plaza, surrounded by his circle of sycophants and gentlemen of the affirma-

tive, Maurice Rynder was getting up a good head of steam. He waddled back and forth across the rug like an animated, fizzing firecracker. Waving his hands eloquently, he spewed words and ideas as only a picture magnate can.

"This is the finest thing of the year," he declaimed. Two press agants and three stenographers jotted down his orders. "It puts technicolor cartoons and other picture stuff positively in the red. Sure it coats plenty of money, but we put Three Dimensional Pictures over with the biggest bang in the business. Jones, release the stories to the newspapers, and do a good job. Young, handle the radio and television. Play up this Kid from Mars like nobody's business. All for Three Dimensional!"

"Yes, Mr. Rynder."

"Yes, Mr. Rynder."

"Fine," said Mr. Rynder. "Hop to it quick. Mr. Hartman wants this played up big—and so do I," he added hastily.

"Yes, Mr. Rynder."

Gracefully smoking a cigarette in a long ivory holder, the gorgeous and eye-gladdening Miss Elaine Elliot was not yessing anything. Her black eyes were fixed disconcertingly on the fat little vice-president's face as he tossed off orders and scattered embryonic ideas right and left.

"So it was just another publicity stunt, after all," she said aloud. "Of all the cheap and garish things I've ever seen pulled on the public—"

"Cheap?" cried Rynder in great pain. "You call it cheap to pay back ten thousand sport fans and repair a horse-croquet field? You call Three Dimensional advertising that will make you famous all over the world, garish? Elaine, how can you say a thing like that?"

"Okay," the glamour girl responded languidly. "But I'm pretty well fed up with this stuff. I warn you, Maurice. I won't have the least thing to do with this brainstorm you and John Hartman are having. Give me a fresh cigarette."

Both press agents leaped to their feet to obey. Maurice Rynder waved them back as he produced a gold case and offered it to Elaine.

"I'm paying you boys to do Elaine Elliot favors that show box-office results, not to offer cigarettes at a thousand dollars a week. Elaine, I swear to you I never—" Rynder broke off. He realized he was about to disclaim credit before his yes men. "I'll swear to you this is not cheap and gaudy. Can't you see how big and—and glamorous it is? Why, the whole thing's tremendous. It's gigantic, colossal!"

"You're right," agreed Elaine with a straight face, and nobody else dared so much as snicker.

"There!" beamed Rynder, waxing expansive. "Now, you boys hurry along and start things popping along the various lines I suggested. Keep in touch with me. This has to be done quick. Elaine, I'm glad you understand. There is something you must do. You have to play up to this Lambkin fellow. I want you to be seen together. We got to make some stills. Jones will fake some interviews between you, but we got to capitalize on this before it gets cold."

"WHAT!" Because she was tall, she almost towered above the fat little man. "You are mad, Maurice Rynder! I'll submit to all this fake publicity because my contract calls for it. But you're not going to force me into the company of a lunatic who's not even a good ham actor just for—"

"Hush, hush!" begged Rynder. "That will be all for the present, girls. Transcribe your notes and get out those letters for my signatures."

The stenographers promptly withdrew in the wake of the two press agents. Rynder turned to pour soothing words at his enraged star. They were in the midst of a stormy discussion when the telephone began to ring imperiously.

In relief, the vice-president grabbed up the instrument. His reprieve was short. Elaine watched him curiously as his eyes bulged and his jaw dropped.

"What? What? Yes, I've just released every kind of publicity I could think of. I—Huh? *Kill* it? But, Mr. Hartman, you said distinctly to play it up, and I— Something else has come up? What has come up? Never mind? I—But, listen, I've already—Yes, yes,

I'll try to stop it as best I can."

He pronged the transceiver, tottered over to a chair, and dropped. He let out a temperamental screech that would have done credit to Elaine at her best and madly clutched at his hair with both hands.

"First he says play it up! Then he says kill it! Worse he is than a thousand yes men." He bounced to his feet "I'll talk to you later, Elaine," he cried as he ran toward the door "I've got to stop Jones and Young—if I can catch them. Oh, what a madman!"

"What is it?" Elaine asked anxiously. "What has happened?"

"I don't know," wailed Rynder. "Hartman just called from Colonel Thomlinson's home. He told me to kill every bit of publicity on the Kid from Mars."

"Why?" the girl demanded quickly. "Has—has something happened to Lambkin? He left Meadowbrook with Louis Shayne right after his broadcast"

"No, no—I don't know. Hartman just left Shayne and Lambkin and went to see Thomlinson. They're here, in this hotel!"

"Who? Hartman and Thomlinson?"

A scene of magical splendor appeared before their eyes (Chap. XVIII)

"No, Lambkin and Shayne! I've got to catch Jones and Young." With a slam of the door, the harried Mr. Ryndor was gone.

CHAPTER V

A Medium of Exchange

DESPITE Ryndor's attempt to kill the publicity, New York took the Kid from Mars to its neon-lighted bosom for a full week before dropping him cold. And that, said a smart columnist, was remarkable considering that his act was a weak warm-over of an old Martian radio gag.

Louis Shayne's handling of Llamkin proved more difficult than the sports reporter and his boss had imagined. While the man from Xzorculu played his role grimly to the end, he proved to be neither a dope nor a dummy.

"The first thing to do," said Shayne as he got his charge away from Meadowbrook in a closed car, "is to find you a place to stay. I guess it won't do to show you around the theatrical area. You'd be recognized."

"Why?" asked Llamkin. "Do I resemble any certain Earthman?"

"We're alone, pal," said Shayne wearily. "You've sold us all a nice bill of goods. So drop that nonsense with me when nobody's around. It isn't funny."

"I'm sorry, Louis."

"That's better. Have you ever been in New York before?"

"I've never been on Earth before."

"I thought I said to drop—" Shayne began angrily. He was halted by the grave expression in Llamkin's eyes. "Oh, hell, take off that damned tin hat. You make me think of the invasion of Poland to the tune of 'The Chocolate Soldier'."

"Gladly, if it annoys you. I don't need it for the present. But it isn't tin. It's a special alloy comparable to your chromium steel, but with certain sensitive properties. I use it to control my ship."

He removed the helmet as he spoke, revealing to the reporter a closely cropped head of blond hair which narrowly missed being red.

"Damned if I don't believe you're a Swede, Lambkin, but you speak a choice United States. What's your alibi for that?"

"I have been studying Earth languages for two years," answered Llamkin soberly. "After some consultation with my associates, I selected Americanized English as the most adaptable for our purpose. I purposely followed the style of enunciation of your national spokesman."

"Not too subtle," grunted Shayne. "Mind if I take a look at your war bonnet?"

"Of course not," agreed Llamkin, handing over the helmet.

It was a finely made headpiece. Shayne marveled at its construction and at the obvious expense somebody had gone to to put over this stunt. When he held it to his ear he heard the subdued whine of a distant dynamo and the rhythmic clicking as of a relay switch.

"You mean to say that you keep in touch with your ship's crew with this two-way outfit?" he asked, gently touching the earphones.

"I have no crew," said Llamkin gently. "I control the ship through that helmet and several of the instruments on my belt. I was sent alone to Earth on this mission. Perhaps when I can permit you to examine the vessel you will understand."

"That," said Shayne, "is a date. Can you bring it down tomorrow at a regular airport, or a private spot I will select? I mean, so we can examine it."

FOR THE first time a faint gleam of suspicion appeared in the Kid's blue eyes.

"I can—when the time seems auspicious. It appears to me that you show more interest in my method of transportation than in the fact and purpose of my arrival."

"Lambkin, how can you say that?"

said Shayne reproachfully. "After all the furor at the polo field!"

Llamkin's face brightened. "Then you do believe me?"

"Certainly," said Shayne, his tongue automatically fitting into his cheek.

The guy must be from Scandinavia. He had to come from somewhere with his remarkable ship, and it was obvious he hadn't come from Central Europe. So he must be from some part of Scandinavia. Even his helmet, now that Shayne thought of it, had a sort of Norse motif.

But cynically Louis Shayne couldn't help believing that this was some sort of gigantic hoax. He shrugged and turned his attention to the garments of his companion.

"What kind of material is that stuff?"

"The Xzorculuan name would be unpronounceable to you. But it is a synthetic cloth manufactured like your rayon and nylon, with one major difference. This product is impregnated with asbestos. That makes it practically indestructible. It is loosely woven, so the body can have air. My boots are made of treated silicon, pliable and, of course, electrically insulated. You will achieve such results soon. Your scientists are at last on the right track with the recently developed atom smasher."

Shayne passed up the startling chemistry offered him and seized on technicalities.

"For a Martian, you're damned well informed on what we've done here on Earth," he stated acidly.

"Why not?" asked Llamkin. "We have been studying your planet for three centuries of our time. There are about six hundred and eighty-seven Earth days to our sidereal year."

"You don't say!" retorted Shayne. "How did it happen that you guys didn't contact Earth before? You've had plenty of time—more than five hundred years."

"There always has to be a first time," Llamkin explained patiently. "We are not like Earthlings. We do not explore nor seek adventure for adventure's sake. There must be an urgent necessity to make us brave space and a new planet. The matter of Mars' dying involves thousands and thousands of years, not a few months. First we had to decide that Earth has the element we need. Then we had to prepare and condition a messenger who could stand the drastic change in environment. Since I was an infant, I was dedicated to this mission."

"Say, how old are you?" Shayne asked, carrying the ponderous joke along.

Llamkin hesitated. "From birth, computed by your measure of time, I am physically about thirty years old. Mentally, due to the advanced evolution on Xzor—Mars, I am perhaps fifty. I'm really just a youngster," he added modestly.

"Yeah," replied Shayne. "Just a kid—a kid from Mars."

"Precisely. It was noted that I would be more malleable, more adaptable to Earthly concepts. For here I am to make observations, as well as obtain certain specimens—" He broke of abruptly, glancing sharply at the sports reporter. "I fear I am getting ahead of myself," he apologized.

"You're pretty fast, and plenty slick," admitted Shayne. "But you can't slide on barb-wire."

LLAMKIN puzzled this over as Shayne drove across the Tri-borough Bridge.

"As that remark appears to be irrelevant," he said at last, "I infer that it partakes of that elusive sense of humor for which I seek. Yet you have not given me the impression of being at all what you Earthlings term a comedian."

"Kid, you ought to see me at a party. I'm a scream."

"Indeed?" said Llamkin politely. "This is an interesting structure, this bridge. An excellent example of third-class engineering."

"Indeed?" mimicked Shayne. "And what would you consider first-class?"

"That," replied Llamkin gravely, "would be too intricate for your comprehension. Engineers of the second class built my space ship for me. When do I see Miss Elliot again?"

"I wouldn't know," choked Shayne. "If you can't figure that out by first-class engineering, you'll have to ask Maurice Rynder."

"Why? Is he her parent, or legal guardian?"

"No, He's just the little man who holds her contract for Three Dimensional. As far as she is concerned, he's Santa Claus."

"I see," said Llamkin in a tone which indicated clearly that he did not see. "Earth cities are veritable labyrinths, aren't they?"

"Rabbit warrens," agreed Shayne curtly. "Nothing like the jungle you grew up in."

"There are no trees on Mars," replied Llamkin mildly. "The only arboreal growths are dwarfed specimens, north of the Burning Desert, in the sunken area of Kanobia. That is one of the many reclamation projects the Council of Xzorcus has in view. Xzorcus is the capital city of Xzorculu. What building is that—the one just ahead of us?"

"Telecast Plaza, the swankiest hotel overlooking Central Park. It costs a buck just to slip a question to the doorman, and that's where you and I are going. Hartman said not to spare the horses. So you and I are going to take the swellest suite available—a penthouse, if I can get it."

To his relief, Shayne had little difficulty getting his companion inside the hotel and into the regal suite, which was the house name for the east penthouse. Everybody stared furtively at the bizarre costume of Llamkin, but the guests of Telecast Plaza were too well bred to act inquisitive. Llamkin, for his part, surveyed everything with silent alertness, from the ornate braid on the chest of the doorman to the instrument panel in the express elevator.

Safe at last in the penthouse, Shayne sighed in relief. He rang for Scotch and soda, and flung himself into the depths of a brocaded divan.

"All right, Lambkin, sit down and let's go into a huddle. I'm damned if I know just how to proceed. I certainly can't build you up gratis for some manufacturer, and I'll go nuts if I have to talk baby talk with you. But, damn it, we'll start with that! Now, look. We've got a quaint system of paying for what you get. It's called monetary exchange, and even the Russians haven't found a satisfactory substitute for it yet. But don't let's start a discussion on that subject. We'll take things as they are.

"If your outfit has studied Earth for three of your centuries, you must know you can't just drop in on us and live on air. Didn't you ask for a sort of expense account? As one visiting tribesman to another tribe, didn't you bring anything to barter? In short, what were you going to use for money—marbles or chalk?"

"A pertinent question, Louis," admitted Llamkin. "While we doubtless overlooked a number of things, we did not neglect that."

HE OPENED a sort of inner pocket, and drew forth a handful of gray looking pebbles which he handed to the reporter.

"Uncut diamonds," he said "They seemed to be the most valuable medium of exchange that wouldn't prove too bulky."

"*What?* Holy smoke! Are these genuine? Then—then, you've come from South Africa!"

"Genuine in the sense that they are pure crystallized carbon, yes," said Llamkin. "They are synthetic, of course. They were made by Dneirf in a sub-atomic pressure furnace. Dneirf is one of the Council of Xzorculu. He was my chief mentor in my upbringing. It is a long story, but I will relate it in your hall of science before your savants. When will a time of meeting be set?"

"Jumping Dutchmen!" exclaimed Shayne. "If these artificial diamonds are real, you're in Dutch with Uncle Sam for smuggling undeclared gems. This damned hoax gets crazier and crazier. I've got to get legal advice on this."

"Hoax? I assure you there is no hoax, Louis. And if there is to be a sort of tax on importation, I am ready to pay it. I know what that is. Many centuries ago we had the same sort of absurd system on Xzor—on Mars. Who is this Uncle Sam? A relative of yours?"

"Don't talk—don't say anything,"

pleaded Shayne. "Just sit down while I mix you a drink. I guess I'd better telephone Mr. Hartman."

Llamkin sniffed delicately at the brimming glass Shayne handed him. He tasted it experimentally, then nodded soberly.

"An intoxicant," he said sagely. "Affects the nerve system. We discontinued the use of such stimulants on Mars long before I was born."

"No wonder you have no sense of humor," snapped Shayne. "Just put that stimulant under your belt and shut up."

Llamkin sipped while Shayne started combing the city by phone for the publisher of the *Star-Tribune*. Without having to ask the reporter for any assistance, he mixed correctly a second drink. By the time Shayne located John Hartman and concluded a conversation he had finished it. The sports reporter hadn't missed any of this.

"You learn fast," he commented dryly as he pronged the transceiver. "For a kid from Mars, you're doing okay."

"I've been trained in observation since I was a child," answered Llamkin calmly. "This beverage—it communicates a sort of expansive sensation, doesn't it?"

"You're not kidding now, pal. But wait until you try champagne, if you never have. Maybe that's an idea. *In vino, veritas.*"

"That," said Llamkin, frowning slightly as he marshaled his thoughts, "is Latin. There is truth in wine. I fear that meaning escapes me."

"So you know one of Earth's dead languages, too. Well, what do you care as long as you're truthful?"

"What is there to be gained by being otherwise?" asked Llamkin in surprise.

"I'm glad you feel that way," Shayne replied grimly. "That was John Hartman on the phone. He's on his way here now with a surgeon, a scientist, and an alienist. I hope you won't feel hurt. All they'll want to do is turn you inside out."

"Not at all," said the Kid from Mars. "On the contrary, I will welcome it gladly."

Shayne choked on his Scotch and soda.

CHAPTER VI

Preliminary Steps

JOHN HARTMAN put in his appearance with a whole retinue. Immediately in his rear came three professional looking men. Following them in single file stumbled half a dozen porters, laden like a safari.

The three staff officers dismissed the portage detail and checked over their supplies. The publisher came to the crux of the business with admirable brevity.

"Did you have to pick a penthouse in this particular hotel, Shayne? Isn't it enough that Three Dimensional Pictures is paying for the one Elaine Elliot's using? Rynder is already delirious over the expenses out at Meadowbrook."

"You told me to shoot the wad," replied the sports reporter coolly. "You wanted the Kid from Mars corralled, didn't you? Well, this was the safest and most exclusive place I could think of. I'm beginning to think you'll wish I'd hired a private sanitarium."

"We'll see about that," promised Hartman, turning on the grave-faced cause of this commotion. "Now, young man, if you are ready to drop this

hocus-pocus stuff about Mars, I'm ready to talk business with you. If not, I came prepared to call your bluff." He grimly indicated the three men he had brought with him.

"I am more than anxious to talk business," responded the Kid from Mars in his melodious voice. "Are these gentlemen the scientists to whom I am to address my message?"

The publisher's thawing smile froze upon his face. He reddened angrily when he noted the cynical grin about the sports reporter's lips. He cleared his throat. Shayne recognized the signs and settled back to watch the fireworks in lazy interest.

"Now see here, Mr. Lamsky," Hartman began. "It is perfectly obvious that you chose this bizarre method of approach to impress America with your stratosphere ship. I am the first to admit that you have succeeded admirably. But enough is enough. I am not interested in carrying the farce any further. Where and when can I see the plans of your inventions? How soon will you give a demonstration. What is your price?"

"My name is Llamkin There is no proper way of spelling it with the Phoenician alphabet. If you have difficulty with it, just call me by the first numerals of my Martian identification —X-twenty-three. Did I understand you to say that Miss Elaine Elliot is housed in this same domicile?"

The publisher strangled down a shout of fury.

"Just call him the Kid from Mars," suggested Shayne with a blank face.

"Lambkin will do," roared Hartman. "And since you insist, Mr. Lambkin, permit me to introduce these gentlemen. Dr. Caldwell, Dr. Weidmar, and Professor Strauss. They are here to examine you. Now will you stop your nonsense?"

"I am honored," said Llamkin, bowing. "I am at your service, gentlemen."

Shayne sat upright in his chair.

"You mean you're going to submit to a physical and mental examination, Kid?"

"Why not?" asked Llamkin. "Why should I object to undergoing precisely what I shall ask a few Earthmen to do on Mars?"

In Shayne's opinion, that was a hell of a screwy answer.

"Proceed, gentlemen," snapped the publisher.

IT WAS like tossing a fish to a troupe of seals. Professor Strauss pounced upon the burnished helmet which lay on the table. The two doctors had Llamkin stripped from the waist up in practically nothing flat. Hartman sat down and mixed himself a stiff Scotch and soda, a grimly expectant smile on his face.

Llamkin not only submitted with fearless dignity, but he was usually a step ahead of his examiners. He was prodded and X-rayed and questioned and examined more thoroughly than Shayne had ever seen anybody gone over outside a dissecting room.

Llamkin examined the surgical and electrical equipment used on him with as much interest as the doctors exhibited in him. When handed a solution of bismuth to drink, while Caldwell placed a fluorescent screen before him, he nodded sagely.

"A solution of the metallic element with the atomic weight of two hundred and eight. You wish to study a shadowgraph of my digestive tract with your ray machine, do you not?"

"Exactly," replied Dr. Weidmar, the psychiatrist. "You have been examined before? In Europe, perhaps?"

"On Mars, but not quite so crudely," was the calm and matter-of-fact answer.

He hesitated only once when asked to remove the remainder of his clothing. Then he agreed soberly. He took off his intricately studded and dialed belt and laid it carefully on the ornate white mantelpiece.

Professor Strauss put down the helmet, his lips pursed thoughtfully, and turned to Shayne.

"I'd like to see those uncut diamonds."

"Here," answered the reporter, producing them.

It took just five minutes with a few tools and a microscope for the scientist to raise a gleaming eye. He nodded, his lips parted slightly.

"These are genuine," he informed the publisher. "There seems to be evidence

of synthetic crystallization. But they are apparently flawless, and therefore, quite valuable."

While the publisher and the reporter goggled at each other, the professor turned his eagle eye on the material of Llamkin's garments. He verified everything the Kid from Mars had told Shayne. He seemed puzzled at the results he obtained. Then he walked over to the mantel to examine the queer belt belonging to Llamkin.

At this, a startling thing happened. With one mighty leap the nude man crossed the room. He caught the astonished professor by the nape of the neck and fairly hurled him aside.

"Don't touch this!" he said. His blue eyes were blazing with angry fires, his fine nostrils dilated. "Nobody must lay a finger on this belt—ever! This is my only connecting link with my ship, and my ship is my only connecting link with my world. In your ignorance you must not tamper with forces you do not understand. It that clear?"

Hartman shot a swift side glance at Shayne and then spoke soothingly.

"Of course, of course, Mr. Lambkin. The professor didn't mean to pry into your closely guarded secrets. He is merely conducting a scientific examination."

THE FIRE slowly died out of Llamkin's eyes, although his face remained set in grim and serious lines.

"I am sorry," he apologized as Professor Strauss picked himself up from the divan, uninjured but badly dazed. "I didn't mean to be rude or rough, but this belt is the one thing that must be inviolate. Do not think I am hiding anything from you, my friends. I assure you I am not. I will gladly explain even this belt to your gathered savants, but it must not be tampered with in the meanwhile. I regret that I must insist on this."

"Sure, we understand," said Hartman cryptically. "Let the doctors finish with you."

The examination was concluded without further incident. Llamkin calmly sheathed his magnificently muscled body in his queer clothing while the three professional men went into a brief huddle.

"Shall I send you a confidential report, Mr. Hartman?" asked Dr. Caldwell, putting away his instruments.

"Why not speak frankly, Doctor?" asked Llamkin solemnly as he readjusted his belt about his trim waist. "Surely you didn't find me particularly abnormal? I would like to know how I differ from Earthmen."

"Let him hear it," said Shayne. "He can take it. If you can crack him, you're better men than I am, drinking gin."

"That has a familiar ring," said Llamkin, looking at the inscrutable face of the reporter. "Isn't that from the literature of your race?"

"You win again, Mr Poem Detective," replied Shayne laconically. "I'll stooge for you on that one. I was paraphrasing Kipling—as if you didn't know."

"Thank you. Paraphrase, to translate with latitude . . . ."

Llamkin's voice trailed off into silence. Dr. Caldwell snorted and addressed himself to the publisher.

[*Turn page*]

"Physically, Mr. Hartman, this man is a splendid specimen of manhood. I admit that I was somewhat amazed to find not even a vestigial trace of the vermiform appendix, wisdom teeth, or tonsils. But otherwise he is a perfectly normal and healthy male animal of not more than thirty years of age."

"You mean he is as human as we are?" Hartman asked, giving the listening subject a hard glance. "There's nothing queer about his lack of those anatomical items?"

"I mean precisely that, sir. There have been other cases of slightly advanced evolution recorded, although I admit I have never found all such points in one case. But I wouldn't call it more than remarkable."

"I see. And your findings, Dr. Weidmar?" Hartman looked at the alienist and then at Llamkin's calm and politely interested face with relish.

Dr. Weidmar stroked his trim Vandyke caressingly and spoke in a judicious manner.

"While the patient seems to harbor an obsession, laboring under an illusion—I wouldn't go so far as to call it a distinct aberration—or a sort of hallucination regarding his point of origin—That is to say, it is his idiosyncrasy to affect a certain fixation—"

"You mean he's bipped on the subject of Mars," clarified Shayne.

"Er—yes," Dr. Weidmar accepted the amendment. "In short, aside from this obviously willful whimsy, the subject is as sane a man as I have ever examined, and a great deal more intelligent than most."

"That," said the publisher tersely, "is exactly what I expected to hear. But I never thought I would be crazy enough to spend money to convince an inventor that he isn't crazy. Now, Lambkin, must I embarrass you further, or are you ready to drop this masquerade and get down to brass tacks?"

"MASQUERADE?" repeated Llamkin, his keen gaze traveling from one face to the other. "I don't believe I understand."

"All right," snapped the publisher impatiently. "You asked for it. If you can't read the handwriting on the wall, Professor Strauss will try to interpret it for you. Can you oblige us, Professor?"

"With pleasure," said the scientist, briskly rubbing his hands. He was still ruffled over the abrupt manhandling he had received. "This whole business is absurd. I grant the mechanical and chemical genius which indubitably lies behind the evidence I have been permitted to examine—namely, metal, synthetic diamonds, materials, and boots. That is rendering sufficient homage to science. These things aside— I am going to enjoy the rest of this!

"*Mister* Lambkin," he addressed himself to the gravely alert Llamkin. "I'd like to propound a few questions in simple physics to you. Will you answer me as glibly as you have run through your examination?"

"Gladly, Professor, if I can," responded Llamkin, patently oblivious to the sarcasm. "But I do not claim to be an authority on the subject. However, if I cannot enlighten you on the matter which puzzles you, I can promise you the correct information later from M-fifty-four-W-fifty-five-sixteen. He was my instructor in the physical sciences, and one of the greatest savants of Mars."

"Do the best you can," said Strauss acidly. "Perhaps it will be good enough. First, roughly, what is the mass and volume of Mars as compared with that of Earth?"

"That is so elemental that you should know it," said Llamkin politely. "Mars has approximately one-seventh the volume, and one-ninth the mass, of Earth. Is that what you mean, or do you wish specific figures?"

"That will do nicely," said the professor smoothly. "And what, if you please, is the surface gravity of Mars—again as compared with that of Earth?"

"Let me reflect," said Llamkin, without pausing to do much reflecting. "Mars has a density of three-point-nine-two compared with Earth's five-point-five. The surface gravity is thirty-eight one-hundredths."

"Correct. Then, an object weighing, say, thirty-eight pounds on Mars would, on Earth, weigh—" Strauss paused interrogatingly.

"One hundred pounds," Llamkin informed, his attitude as free of condes-

cension as a patient father to a faltering child.

"Precisely," almost purred the scientist. "Just what was Mr. Lambkin's weight again, please, Dr. Caldwell?"

"A hundred and ninety pounds," supplied the surgeon.

"Ah!" snapped the professor. "Do you weigh about the same at home—on Mars—Mr. Lambkin?"

"Certainly."

"Which would make your weight—to your muscles—the equivalent of five hundred pounds here on Earth! Yet you move around agilely, you jump like a professional athlete, and throw men about as lightly as I would toss a ball. By all rights, you should scarcely be able to drag your own weight around! How do you account for that, my fine Martian fellow? How about the atmospheric density? The oxygen content? Why aren't your Martian lungs compressed under the pressure, or fairly burnt up by the high percentage of oxygen here on Earth? Do you think we are simpletons?"

CHAPTER VII

Quiz and Result

LAMKIN gaped at the triumphantly chattering group in amazed bewilderment.

"Gentlemen! Gentlemen! What a trifling matter to be puzzling you. But you couldn't know, of course. I was dedicated to this mission as a child. From virtual infancy, I was brought up in a specially constructed laboratory on the southern edge of the Burning Desert, where all Earthly conditions were imposed on me Never once was I permitted to experience the natural conditions prevailing upon my native planet.

"Hence, I am a full ten inches shorter in stature than the average adult Martian, due to the gravitational drag constantly applied to me. My frame is sturdier, my muscles thicker. In fact, I am more nearly like an Earthman than a Martian, although there is fundamentally little difference in our races. But I shall explain all of this and much more when I address your scientists."

Professor Strauss waved his hands in angry defeat.

"I give up. How can I do anything with a lunatic who seems to know science forward and backward, and then gives me a ridiculous answer like that? I can't check facts against such childish fabrications, Mr. Hartman."

"Do you imply that you doubt my veracity?" Llamkin demanded.

"No, not at all," soothed the publisher quickly, winking at the annoyed professor. "You simply confound the professor. It doesn't matter. That will be all, gentlemen. Send me your respective statements for your services, and I'm sure I needn't ask you to consider this entire matter confidential. Shayne, I'd like a word with you."

The board of examiners began to pack up their stuff, and Shayne called the desk for special porter service. While Llamkin watched this procedure with alert eyes, Shayne followed his employer to the kitchen of the suite.

"Now look, Shayne," the publisher stated earnestly to the reporter. "I see that it's not going to be easy to handle this nut. Is he deliberately going on with this hoax, or does he really believe that stuff?"

"Frankly, I don't know," admitted Shayne. "What difference does it make? Now that you've come to take over the nursing job, I'm going home."

"You're going to stay right here and guard that lunatic," retorted the publisher firmly. "He's smart enough to know how important that airship invention of his is. I want it! But, damn it, I'm not trying to steal it."

"I turned professional a long time ago, Mr. Hartman," replied the sports reporter. "I play games only for money."

"All right, you'll get it. Your job is to freeze tight to this idiot and keep everybody else away from him. Show him a good time. Thaw him out. Draw him out. Do anything you have to, but get me an option on that ship and a chance to examine it. We've simply got to have that ship for America. Colonel Thomlinson will handle things at Washington. But first we've got to get our hands on that ship before any foreign power or agency has the chance. Understand?"

"I'm beginning to," Shayne replied. "And if you're in such a hurry, you'll get further with him by staging that meeting he's hollering for."

HARTMAN could scarcely speak for a moment.

"And make the *Star-Tribune* the laughing stock of the world? Besides practically inviting every espionage agent in the country to nose in ahead of us? Now you're talking as crazy as this Llamkin fellow. No, we'll handle this quietly. It may take a little time and persuasion. You've got to gain his confidence. And heaven help you if you make a bobble. I want a daily report of your progress. I'm going over to talk to Colonel Thomlinson."

They returned to the drawingroom of the suite, where Shayne gestured at the handful of synthetic diamonds.

"What about these ice cubes?" he asked stiffly.

"I thought," spoke up Llamkin, "we could place them with some honest lapidary, to be cut and polished in Earthly style before disposing of them."

"That won't be necessary," vetoed Hartman. "Put them in the hotel safe, or in a deposit box for the present. As our guest, Mr. Llamkin, you will have no need for money or its equivalent."

"Just as you say," agreed Llamkin, in simple trust. "When do I address your body of scientists, Mr. Hartman?"

"It will take a few days to assemble them," evaded the publisher. "While you're waiting, just relax and enjoy yourself. Mr. Shayne will see to your slightest want. I presume your airship is safe, wherever it is?"

"Perfectly safe as long as I do not lose my control belt."

"I see," nodded Hartman, forbearing to press for information. "Good night, gentlemen. And, Shayne, don't forget what I said about watching our guest carefully."

"How can I forget?" asked Shayne in a flat voice. "It's lucky I'm not married."

When the publisher left, Llamkin turned a worried countenance to the reporter.

"I simply must isolate that elusive sense of humor, Louis," he said earnestly. "I cannot over-emphasize its importance."

"Brother, you've got one and don't know it," Shayne advised. "I'll try to help you discover it. Suppose I take you to see a few of the current productions that're cluttering up the theaters under the quaint delusion that they are comedies. Come on, let's go to bed."

"Very well— You are kind to me, Louis, and I shall not forget," said Llamkin gratefully. "There is so much I must learn about Earth before I return to Mars. And—and, if it can be arranged, I would like to spend a little time in the company of Elaine Elliot. She affects me strangely."

"You shall, you shall," promised Shayne between clenched teeth. "Somebody else ought to suffer a little, and it won't hurt the glamour girl. She's just about your speed on the double talk. What have I ever done to deserve all of it?"

"I beg your pardon?"

"Don't mention it. I'm just trying to think of a tailor I can get here before breakfast to measure you for some clothes."

"You don't think mine are adequate?"

"Kid, they are more than adequate," Shayne assured him solemnly. "They are eloquent. I'm going to dream about them all night."

JOHN HARTMAN was conferring with Colonel Thomlinson. It was the conversation that resulted in the apparently inexplicable reversal of orders to Maurice Rynder.

But at that moment, another conference was taking place in a corner of the cocktail lounge of the Telecast Plaza. Messrs. Grosset and Putnam, of Rainbow Pellets, Inc., were busily on the scout.

"Yes," said Grosset, in answer to the unspoken question of his mild looking but long-nosed companion. "He's here—in the regal suite. Hartman and some other men left just before you and I came in. There's nobody up there with him but that sports reporter. It cost me ten dollars to get that information from the night bell-captain. All we have to do now is get him out of here."

"All we have to do?" quavered Putnam. "Did you say all?"

"Practically all," amended Grosset, flexing his biceps and doubling his well manicured fists. "Once we get him away from that dyspeptic, Shayne, the rest will be easy. Rainbow Pelleta can offer him so much more than Three Dimensional that we'll dazzle him."

"And if we don't?"

"We'll string him along while our staff shoots pictures of him endorsing Rainbow Pellets. I've got those newsreel men planted at the Canary Club The telecast equipment is set up and waiting in the Peacock Room of the Ritz-Astor. Between now and morning, we will get a million dollars' worth of advertising out of him, free. And then, if we can't handle him, we can call C.J. to close the deal in person."

Never had William Grosset voiced a truer prophecy.

"Yes, I know," said Putnam, his thin nose twitching like a rabbit's. "But how are we going to spirit him away from here?"

"Money, Mr. Putnam, unlocks many doors," Grosset explained. "You be ready to talk hard and fast to this Llamkin bird. If Shayne starts to interfere, just leave that reporter to me."

Putnam looked more like a rabbit than ever. Even his ears quivered, and his Adam's apple bobbed convulsively.

"I—I don't know just what to say," he protested weakly. "I don't think C.J. meant to go as strong as kidnaping."

"See here, Mr. Putnam," said Grosset in a terse voice. "There are a lot of things I don't go in for myself. But you heard the old man threaten to throw me out on my ear if I fail. You may have enough put away to retire on, but I haven't. I'm not going to have the can tied onto me over a crackpot stunt like this Meadowbrook business. We're going to nab this Llamkin guy if only to strike back at Hartman. Look what he did to us over his own telecast hookup on our honestly bought time. Besides, who said anything about kidnaping?"

"N-nobody," chattered Mr. Putnam.

"All right. Swallow your drink and come on."

Quaking in his number-seven French-last shoes, Ebenezer Putnam followed Rainbow Pellet's go-getter. And Bill

HARTMAN

Grosset was a bull when his ire was aroused. In this case, his ire and hire both were up and fighting. Grosset may have looked soft and effete, but that was just an external impression. Inside, he was harder and colder than refrigerated steel. He had had to fight out of the gutter to reach the first rung of the ladder to success. He still had a few marks and all the tricks of that brutal, ruthless battle.

UNKNOWN to Putnam, who knew almost everything his subordinate had been doing, Bill Grosset had been making plans and distributing largess since eight o'clock. Now, at eleven, it was time for a few of his arrangements to come to fruition.

He led the vice-president to the men's lounge in the first basement. A Telecast Plaza porter met them there. Without a word being spoken, he led them toward the luggage room. One of the freight elevators was waiting. On its floor stood a large wardrobe trunk.

"Get in," directed Grosset.

Putnam entered the elevator, pointing mutely at the trunk, which was open and empty.

"In case we have trouble," informed Grosset, "Llamkin get a free ride in a trunk. Don't look so troubled. We're not going to hurt anybody. Now listen carefully, Putnam. This freight elevator only goes to the top floor of the

hotel. We'll have to walk along a wing corridor and climb the stairs to the penthouse level. We'll come back the same way. You see, the idea is to get Llamkin out of the hotel without attracting attention or suspicion."

"How do we get into the regal suite?" was Mr. Putnam's natural problem.

"Like this," said Grosset, indicating the trim bell-captain who stepped into the cage at that moment. "Got the keys, Flannigan?"

"Yes, sir," answered the captain, holding them up.

"Okay. Let 'er go, Powell. This little job is costing Rainbow Pellets five hundred fish, Putnam, and we don't

know anything about these two men. It may mean their jobs. Better start keeping an expense account."

The two hotel employees exchanged looks, then stood in silence as the cage shot silently up to the top floor. Here Flannigan took charge. Powell locked the freight elevator and followed the others. In this order they traversed the corridor and mounted to the roof.

Flannigan led to the garden entrance of the east penthouse and quietly inserted the key. The door opened and they filed in. They passed through the dark, deserted express elevator foyer. A second key job, and the suite itself was open to them.

"Pssst!" warned Flannigan. "There's a light in the bedroom on the right."

"Wait here," ordered Grosset, advancing into the gloom of the living room. "Come on, Putnam."

CHAPTER VIII

From Night Club—

JUST as they reached the middle of the room, there was a soft click. The place was flooded with light from the ceiling fixture. At the threshold of the room stood the bizarre figure of the man they sought. He was fully dressed.

"Llamkin!" exclaimed Grosset softly, while Putnam uttered a little yelp of alarm.

"Yes," answered the Kid from Mars. His keen eyes darted over the group, returning to the natty advertising manager. "I remember you. You are the radio announcer I saw this afternoon."

"Wrong," said Grosset, shaking his head. He added significantly: "I am the man who paid for the announcing. You're thinking of Jack Bachelor. My name is Bill Grosset. Where is Shayne?"

"Asleep in his room. How did you get inside this apartment?"

"With the magic password 'money' and a couple of keys. I came to see you. This is Mr. Putnam, vice-president of the company."

"How do you do," said Llamkin, bowing. "Mr. Hartman sent you two gentlemen?"

"Yes," replied Grosset promptly. "He wants to confer privately with you. Can you go with us?"

"Certainly," said Llamkin agreeably. "Wait here and I will call Louis."

"Let him sleep," offered Grosset easily. "He needs the rest. You'll be back before he can get dressed."

"Perhaps that would be more considerate," agreed Llamkin trustfully. "I am ready."

Like a lamb, indeed, he turned out the light in his bedroom and accompanied them. The two hotel employees in the doorway stared in amazement.

"Powell," breathed the bell-captain,

"if you'd of told me they still grew this dumb, I wouldn't of believed you."

"Start talking Rainbow Pellets in an easy way," whispered Grosset, giving the vice-president a little push and covering the retreat personally.

"Ah, yes," gulped Putnam hesitantly. "I see you don't sleep well, Mr. Llamkin. You should take a Rainbow Slumber Vitamin Pellet upon retiring."

"The novelty of my surroundings absorbs my attention. I can sleep or stay awake at will. I need no panacea."

"Ah, but the dreams induced by Rainbow Pellets make sleep a delight. We feel we are the benefactors of mankind. You really ought to make a trip through our laboratories and view our various processes. Why, a visit to our research department alone would open your eyes to the wonderful nature of our work."

"What a hell of a spiel!" muttered Grosset under his breath. "How did Putnam ever get to be vice-president?"

He didn't breathe easily until Flannigan relocked the last door. Not a sound was aroused in the sports reporter's bedroom.

"Say!" the bell-captain whispered. "If those pellets are that good, I think I'll take a few. Colored dreams ought to be something!"

"Thank you, Mr. Putnam," Llamkin was saying. He paced the little man down the stairs to the floor below. "I would indeed like to visit your plant."

"I'm dreaming now," Grosset answered the bell-captain. "Come on."

Lamkin made no comment as he was hurried to the freight elevator and whisked to the basement. It had been much too easy. And Grosset found that out shortly.

From the basement, Powell conducted them to the steps leading up to the parking circle. Between Putnam and Grosset, Llamkin mounted to a closed car that waited with softly purring motor.

"Where is Mr. Hartman?" Llamkin asked.

"At the office of the Rainbow plant," stated Grosset promptly. "He asked us to show you some of our methods of advertising on the way. Promotion work, you know—far superior to Three Dimensional Pictures."

"We have nothing like that on Mars," replied Llamkin. "We don't seem to have any need for amusement."

"Now isn't that too bad," sympathized Grosset, helping his purloined guest into the car. "Head for the Canary Club, Mike."

THE Canary Club on East Fifty-third Street was a swanky night spot where people with social position went to be seen with heels, gamblers, racketeers, and glamor girls like Elaine Elliot. Tawdry and ghastly by day, at night the Canary Club had a glitter and glamor and fascination all its own.

This was the spot Grosset had chosen for flashlight photos and a newsreel sequence to connect the Kid from Mars with Rainbow Pellets. There was only one slight flaw in his calculations, but he couldn't have foreseen that Maurice Ryndor and Elaine Elliot had a midnight reservation at the Canary Club.

The first whiff of trouble began at the hat-check room. Llamkin flatly refused to check his helmet.

"But, sir," said the head-waiter, after being called by a page, "I must insist. No gentleman enters the Canary dining room with a hat."

"I do," said Llamkin firmly, "or I don't enter."

"Ver-r-ry well," replied Emile, the head-waiter, drawing himself up in the dignity which had frozen greater personages than this garish actor. "There is no room. All the tables are taken."

"Now, here, Emile," said Grosset. "You know better than that. I reserved a table by phone. I spoke to you."

"Yes, sir, I know," Emile said doggedly. "But I cannot permit a hat, not even the—er—headgear of an actor who has come from the theater in costume."

There was a sudden flash of light. A photographer had snapped a picture of the group.

"Label that one 'The Kid from Mars refuses to enter the Canary Club until Emile produces proof that he takes Rainbow Pellets,'" ordered Grosset coolly. "Here, Emile." He thrust an ornate vial of opalescent pellets into the astounded head-waiter's hand. "Take this shot, Harry."

Again the flash and the click of a camera shutter.

"Label that one, 'Emile produces the proof,'" said Grosset. "Now, Emile, if you want us to release that second shot, you'd better get wise to yourself. Do we go in, or don't we?"

"The Kid from Mars?" exclaimed Emile. "Why didn't you tell me this meant publicity for the Canary Club, Mr. Grosset? But certainly! Come this way, gentlemen."

He turned to lead a personally conducted tour.

"I don't understand," protested Llamkin.

"Neither do I," admitted Mr. Putnam dazedly. "C. J. would be crazy if he tried to fire Grosset. Come, Mr. Llamkin."

Emile seated the three of them at the most conspicuous table in the dining room. Over in one corner, a floodlight blazed on and a pair of newsreel cameramen began cranking away.

"I thought there was just to be a little filming of various celebrities tonight," apologized Emile abjectly. "I am so sorry, Mr. Grosset. I will see that you have every possible attention. Er—here is your vial of Rainbow Pellets."

He snapped his fingers. Two waiters came scurrying forward.

"Keep the pellets," said Grosset. "Have some pleasant dreams for a change. Sit here, Llamkin. Send over the orchestra leader, Emile."

LLAMKIN seated himself in the designated chair, staring around him in wonder. The highly tailored orchestra conductor approached, and Grosset casually slipped him a crisp bill.

"Fifty bucks on your expense account, Putnam," he directed. "Order something for us. Maestro, bow about a nice announcement to the crowd? Just say that the Kid from Mars is here to find out what splendid entertainment it takes to keep café society out of bed—with a bottle of Rainbow Pellets in their hands."

For fifty dollars the maestro did an overwhelming job. A cow-eyed débutante put down her drink and stared at the colorful Kid from Mars.

"For a dream like that," she murmured ecstatically to her escort, "I'd take a hundred Rainbow Pellets."

"Oh, yeah?" returned her companion surlily. He twisted his head and scowled at the handsome features of Llamkin. "Well, if that nightmare makes a pass at you, I'll cram that silly tin hat down his throat."

That was no idle threat. Peter Van Horst, the Third, was three things. He was as tall as, and huskier than, Llamkin. He was a gridiron star, who happened to be in love with Gwendolyn Sumner. He was reaching that stage of intoxication known in the vernacular as practically boiled. A bad combination for Gwendolyn to buck, perhaps, but Gwendolyn was a stage ahead of her massive boy-friend.

"Yes," she snapped back. "I think he is adorable."

Promptly Mr. Van Horst, the Third, levered himself erect.

"So I'll amble over and just change his looks," he said negligently.

"No," the girl cried. "Peter, sit down. *Peter!*"

The swelling music of the orchestra covered her frantic cry. She rose to follow her burly escort among the tables and through the crowd that was rising to dance. Just then, Elaine Elliot and Maurice Rynder appeared at the entrance archway.

Completely unconscious of impending calamity, Grosset was earnestly expounding the glories of Rainbow Pellets to Llamkin. Putnam sat nodding and smiling happily. It was the little man who first saw trouble coming. His smile froze on his face. He tried to speak and point at the same time. Either job would have required all his attention.

Peter Van Horst approached from the side. He snatched up a bumper of champagne from an ice bucket, raised it above his head. Viciously he brought it down with a crash on Llamkin's burnished helmet.

The bottle shattered. The carbonated beverage showered over Llamkin's vivid clothes in a silvery spray. The force of the blow shoved his helmet down over his ears.

"Make a play for my girl, will you?" roared Van Horst. "I'll show you pretty

hoys how to get penalized for heing offside."

He lunged forward to grasp his adversary by the shoulders. A shout of excitement arose and a woman screamed. Grosset and Putnam were too startled to move.

But Llamkin was not. A terrihle expression of alarm on his face, he twisted to one side and darted erect. His chair stood between him and the angry Van Horst. His hands shot first to his head and readjusted his helmet. Then they zipped to his hroad belt. He touched several huttons and dials in rapid succession.

The alarm on his features turned to relief that swiftly changed to anger. Van Horst kicked the chair out of his way and made another grah for the eelish Llamkin while he aimed a haymaker.

Waiters came charging up. Patrons fell back out of the way in mounting hysteria. At the doorway, Elaine Elliot caught Rynder hy the shoulder.

"Look!" she cried. "For heavens' sake, Maurice—look! There's the man whose publicity you've heen claiming you had to kill!"

MAURICE RYNDER had only time anough to let out a bleat like a stricken goat. There wasn't time for anyhody to do anything.

Llamkin deftly twisted away from the wild swing Mr. Van Horst uncorked at him. Then he leaned forward. Before the husky foothall star even finished his swing, Llamkin grabbed him by the neck and the crotch. He lifted him ahove his head and whirled swiftly. He actually hurled the heavier man at the liquor bar.

The involuntary projectile skimmed the top of the bar like a gull gliding over the Hudson. He flew onward to crash into a pyramid of bottles, glassware and paneled mirrors. For only two hundred and ten pounds of man, he did nearly a thousand dollars' worth of damage. And the nearest waiters, instead of halting, made the error of grahbing at Llamkin.

The Kid from Mars snatched up the ice hucket and crowned the first. The second he sprawled across a table with

DR. FOLKSTONE

a hack-handed swing. He grahhed up his chair to meet the attack of the third and fourth.

Now people were shouting and screaming. Missiles began to fly. Grosset never got out of his seat. A silver sugar bowl cracked him on the back of the head. He squashed his face on the tahle and let it stay there. Putnam, all hut rigid with fright, managed to slide under the table.

Indiscriminately—like in the movies—all the males got into that fight, or started others of their own. The orchestra hecame involved when a flying bottle went through the bass drum. More waiters elhowed into the mess.

Gwendolyn, the innocent cause of the entire affair, had fainted against a convention delegate from Terre Haute, who sat with a bottle of catsup running down over his lap. His wife cowered beyond him, wringing her hands helplessly.

The reason for the fight had long heen forgotten in the general chaos. All attention was untenderly focussed on Llamkin.

Emile, like a good general, directed the attack from the safety of the har. His strategy was so successful that it wrecked the Canary Club completely, reducing its costly fixtures to a heap of junk. Only the newsreel men in the corner kept their heads and managed

to keep out of danger at the same time. They ground away at their cameras until the lights failed.

Screaming through the street, the riot squad arrived. In the middle of the dance floor, surrounded by wreckage and unconscious forms, the splintered remnant of a chair in his hand and master of all he surveyed, stood Llamkin, practically unscathed.

"He—him—the R-r-rainbow Pellet man!" shouted Emile to the bluecoats. "He has r-r-ruined the place! Ar-r-rest him!"

The red-faced sergeant advanced stolidly through the mess. His men were cautiously spreading out to flank him, riot guns in hand.

"Okay, buddy," said the sergeant to the victor of the fight. "Take it easy now or ye'll be takin' a trip to the hospital instead of the station."

"Oh, I'm not injured at all," said Llamkin gravely, dropping his fragmentary cudgel. "But I'm afraid a number of these queerly acting people are."

"Ar-r-rest him!" shrilled Emile.

"All right, all right," said Sergeant Reilly "Holy Dempsey, what a scrap this must have been! What's it all about, Rainbow man?"

"I don't know," answered Llamkin. "Nobody bothered to inform me."

"Good heavens!" moaned Maurice Rynder in the ante-room to Elaine. "I've got to telephone John Hartman."

CHAPTER IX

—To Night Court

WILBERFORCE MARTINEAU, city magistrate, was finishing his week on the night shift, and his disposition was sour. The judge was an able man, worthy of better things and in line for appointment to a Federal bench. In the meantime, even a jurist had to feed his family. So Judge Martineau made his circuit of the city courts and waited grumpily for better times.

Of all his highly unpleasant tasks, Martineau found the night courts most distasteful. Vagrants and drunks, domestic brawls and liquor, petty thievery and stew bums, juvenile delinquents and booze—but particularly the night courts reeked of booze. Judge Martineau was a teetotaler himself.

It was nearly two o'clock in the morning. The sober judge was hurriedly closing his court so he could get home to a glass of hot milk and a slice of whole wheat toast.

Huddled down at the end of the front bench, his coat collar turned up about his ears and his slouch hat pulled down over his eyes, sat Frank Bronson, night court reporter for the *Post-Times*. He, too, was weary of the endless stream of cases flowing before the august presence, but at least he could doze—which he did. Cops and complainants, detectives and defendants, they all came and went, and nothing ever happened. Even the unusual uproar of half a dozen persons being hauled into the courtroom did not arouse Bronson until the irate justice began pounding with his gavel for order, then just for some quiet.

Standing before the high desk of the judge was a juicy looking group. Others, some of them pretty important, crowded behind the railing. A squad of bluecoats herded the yelling mass.

"Order! Quiet! Silence!" roared the judge.

Bronson snapped awake and took a good look.

"Holy smoke!" he gulped. "Peter Van Horst. Gwendolyn Sumner. Emile of the Canary. Grosset and Putnam of Rainbow Pellets. And the maniac of Meadowbrook. And behind the railing —Hell, I'm seeing things. Elaine Elliot and Maurice Rynder!"

He certainly was seeing things, but the things were true. Cut and scratched in a dozen places, which had been treated by a police surgeon, Peter Van Horst, the Third, was trying to climb over the judge's desk. He mumbled names of importance and large sums of money in the same breath.

Head bound up like that of a swami, Bill Grosset, white of face and sick, wobbled on his feet and tried to think his way out of this one. Gwendolyn was in tears. Emile was sliding around the floor, waving and shouting wildly. Putnam was wringing his hands and

twitching his long nose helplessly.

Only Llamkin seemed at all calm. He was taking in the entire scene with wide and curious eyes.

"Silence!" roared the judge again. The hubbub died slowly. "What's the charge against these people, Sergeant?"

"Drunk and disorderly, your honor," answered Sergeant Reilly. "Sabotage and wreckin' the Canary Club."

"No, no, no!" broke in Emile, pointing dramatically at Llamkin. "Only that one. He has r-r-ruined the Canar-r-ry!"

"And who are you?" demanded the judge coldly.

EMILE was amazed. "I am Emile!"

"Head-waiter of the joint," explained the sergeant. "He's preferrin' the charges."

"Get down off my rostrum!" bellowed the judge at young Van Horst, who had finally clambered to his elbow. "What's your name?"

"I just told you," said Van Horst, nervously springing down. "I'm Peter Van—"

"Don't give your right name, you fool!" yelled Bill Grosset.

"Peter Vanderbilt," finished Van Horst lamely.

"And who are you?" demanded the judge, fixing his cold eyes on Grosset. "His lawyer?"

"I'm Bill Grosset, of Rainbow Pellets, Incorporated," answered the advertising manager firmly. "That fellow was drunk and started all the trouble for no reason at all. But he comes of a good family, and there's no reason for stirring up a lot of—"

"Really?" said the judge witheringly. "This court recognizes no favorites. All men are equal before the law—at least, in my court. What's your name, young woman?"

"You mean me?" quavered Miss Sumner.

But Peter Van Horst had caught on thoroughly.

"Her name is Nelly Gwynn, your honor."

"Of historical fame, no doubt," said his honor acidly. "And who are you, little man with the nervous nose?"

"Ebenezer Putnam," confessed the little man, trying to conquer his nose. "I am the first vice-president of Rainbow Pellets, Incorporated."

"And who are you?" asked Judge Martineau of Llamkin. "The spirit of the Rainbow?"

"My name is Llamkin," answered the Kid from Mars politely.

"Give your full name," droned the voice of the police clerk.

"X-two-three-Z-four-s e v e n-n i n e-eight-nine," obliged Llamkin.

"He didn't ask for your address or telephone number," snapped the judge, banging his gavel.

"I gave you only my name."

The judge glared with red eyes. Frank Bronson leaped to his feet and mounted the dais to whisper in the magistrate's ear. The judge's eyes popped and then narrowed as he nodded grimly.

"I see. But nobody is going to make a mockery of my court to exploit a commodity. So you were drunk and disorderly, eh? Drunk, all of you! Disgraceful! Wrecked the Canary Club, did you? Will one of you maniacs kindly state the case before I remand every last one of you to the clink without bail?"

"Your honor, I'm putting up bail for Miss Gwynn and myself," spoke up Van Horst quickly, digging into his pocket. "How much is it?"

"State your case," Sergeant Reilly prodded the excitable Emile. "Make it snappy. The judge is getting sore."

Emile rushed to the front of the magistrate's desk and proceeded to paint a vivid word picture. It was half-true, half-false, t h o r o u g h l y garbled, although thoroughly voluble. While he was spouting, Maurice Rynder endeavored to attract the attention of the gravely listening Llamkin. He was threatened with expulsion by a burly officer.

The head-waiter didn't know Llamkin, and he was well acquainted with the Van Horst patronage. The result was inevitable. The judge turned a cold eye upon the culprit.

"How do you plead to this charge, Rainbow Llamkin?"

Bill Grosset charged in quickly to explain the other side of the story.

Bang! The magisterial gavel cut him off.

"You will have ample opportunity to state your own case, Mr. Grosset," said his honor icily. "One more interruption out of you, and you will be fined for contempt of court."

"But, please, your honor," protested Grosset. "This has all been an unfortunate mistake. It means millions to Rainbow Pellets. I tell you we're innocent, but I'll guarantee satisfactory settlement to everybody, and—"

"Which has nothing to do with a trial in my court," interrupted his honor, utterly unmoved by this impassioned plea. "Now, Mr. Llamkin?"

Bill Grosset had sense enough to know when he had run up against an immovable object.

"Very well, your honor. May I at least have my legal right to use a telephone?"

"Take this pest to the ante-chamber and let him call a lawyer," the magistrate ordered a bluecoat. "Then return him to the court."

But Grosset didn't want a lawyer. He got in touch with none other than Charles J. Keene. When he had the irate president of Rainbow Pellets on the wire, it took him less than two minutes to outline the situation. Mr. Keene's voice roared back at him.

"Get back into that courtroom and block that infernal magistrate! Demand an adjournment of court long enough to get him into his private room so you can explain things to him. Tell him the truth. I'll send Addison and Blake down there right away to help unsnarl the legal tangle. Of all the dumb things—"

"But the judge won't listen to me," protested Grosset. "The next crack out of me, and I get fined for contempt."

"Get back in there and stall then!" bellowed Mr. Keene. "I'll be down myself as quick as I can get there."

Back in the courtroom, Llamkin was at last answering the charge.

"I don't quite follow your quaint legal procedure—if this is a legal proceeding. But I think I am being accused of wrong-doing. Is that conclusion correct?"

Judge Martineau snapped forward, clutching the gavel like a mace.

"Young man, I'll slap you into jail in two minutes for your impudence. Have you a license for this street advertising stunt of yours? Well, have you?"

"I beg your pardon. Am I advertising anything? I was under the impression that I was being shown what advertising is. Mr. Putnam and Mr. Grosset were explaining this odd Earthly custom of advertising a quasi-medical product when the inebriated young man yonder attacked me without the slightest warning."

"Are you denying that you were drunk yourself?" demanded the judge scathingly.

"Why should I deny what was never asked me?" said Llamkin earnestly.

Bang! "Answer the original question! Guilty or not guilty?"

"Hey, wait!" came the high voice of Maurice Rynder from beyond the railing. Breaking away from the clawing hand of a policeman, he rushed through the gate. Elaine Elliot followed on his heels. "I was just entering the club with Miss Elliot when the trouble started. Llamkin is not to blame. I saw the whole thing. I demand that I be summoned as a witness!"

THE judge was beginning to glower wildly. He banged his gavel violently and focused his gaze on the new disturbance.

"Who are you?" he snarled politely.

"Maurice Rynder, vice-president of Three Dimensional Pictures, and personally acquainted with the accused man. He is employed by Three Dimensional Pictures. I can vouch for his honesty and sobriety."

"You can what?" roared the judge. "Why, the man smells like a distillery right now!"

"That's the bottle of champagne that young fool broke over his head," stated Rynder. "He grabbed it up, positively unopened, and crowned Llamkin. If it hadn't been for the helmet, it'd be a murder case instead of a night club riot you would be trying."

"He's lying!" cried Putnam. "Llamkin doesn't work for Three Dimen-

The crowd was puzzled by the strangeness of Llamkin's appearance (Chap. I)

sional Pictures. He is under contract with Rainbow Slumber Vitamin Pellets, Incorporated. It's all our idea. That piratical picture concern is trying to steal our stunt."

This was the first explanation Maurice Rynder had heard of the incomprehensible affair. He whirled indignantly on the speaker and shook his fist under the little man's long nose.

"So that's the dirty snake-in-the-grass business? You kidnaped Llamkin away from Louis Shayne! Or did you bribe Shayne? Trying to use him to exploit your crazy pills, and making all this notoriety that will ruin his value for Three Dimensional."

"Us, ruin him?—Snake-in-the-grass?" shouted Putnam angrily. Visions of the ponderous Mr. Keene stiffened his backbone. "You are the snakes! On the very telecast time we bought, you exploited Three Dimensional Pictures. Rainbow Pellets has a strong case, and I can assure you that we are going to sue for damages."

It took four bluecoats to separate the two little vice-presidents. Judge Martineau banged madly for order.

Miss Gwendolyn Sumner by now had sobered sufficiently to renew her allegiance to her wounded hero, Mr. Peter Van Horst. She sprang to her feet and pushed forward to the space in front of the magistrate's desk.

"That man is lying!" she repeated, pointing at Maurice Rynder. "Your honor, this — this Flash Gordon masquerader is to blame for the whole thing. He almost murdered my escort.

Look for yourself. The police surgeon had to take a dozen stitches and use oodles and gobs of tape and bandage, and—"

Elaine Elliot moved sinuously forward. She gripped the younger girl's wrist and jerked her around.

"You're the liar, you silly, drunken, old deb!" she shrilled. "I saw it all. That big bruiser you call an escort is guilty of assault and battery, mayhem, and attempted murder!"

"Oh!" cried Gwendolyn. "Oh! How dare you call Peter Van Horst, the Third, a big bruiser? Oh!" And she aimed a wild swing at the gorgeous Elaine.

Elaine blocked the blow with the ease of professional practise. She brought her beaded vanity bag down on Miss Sumner's head so hard that the post-deb saw the lights and heard the music of her coming out ball two seasons back. She let out a scream of rage and charged to take up the gage of battle.

Two more bluecoats wallowed in to put the stopper on this shrieking angle.

CHAPTER X

Freedom for All

By now the courtroom was a corner of bedlam. Spectators were bursting in from various sources to hear the case. Frank Bronson was writing like mad at the clerk's table. Then he made a dive for the telephone, and Peter Van Horst clamped down on him.

"No, you don't, you sneak!" shouted the Society Mauler. "Call up any newspaper at all and I'll twist your head off."

Judge Martineau was denting his desk with hammer like blows of his instrument of office. His face was purple, going toward black, with outraged dignity. Police officers were racing from all directions. Sergeant Reilly practically had to sit on Emile to prevent him from attacking everybody impartially.

It was Llamkin who quelled the riot.

"Your honor," he cried in his vibrant, carrying voice. "I still do not comprehend what goes on. But am I to infer that full payment for the damage inflicted at the Canary Club will straighten out this tangle?"

"It will straighten out everything but the charge against you," replied the judge. "How do you plead?"

"I plead that you release all these—these excited persons. I will gladly reimburse everybody for everything."

"Then you admit your culpability!" roared the judge.

"Not at all. I am unhappy to see all this unhappiness, which I still do not understand. But I came to Earth on a mission of peace. If I can help in this present emergency, I'll be only too glad to do so."

"And just what is your security to make good five thousand dollars' worth of damage?" demanded the judge in ominous tones.

Llamkin, in faint contempt, pulled a small pouch from his belt. He upended it to spill a fortune in uncut diamonds on the desk.

"The smallest of these will be more than enough," he said soberly. "I give it without hesitation."

Judge Martineau's eyes bulged, for his hobby was precious stones.

"Blue diamonds!" he gasped. "Uncut stones!"

He snatched up one faintly glowing lump and held it to his eye, staring at the light as he circled his other hand around it. Slowly he lowered his hands and brought his attention back to the now silent group before him.

"These are apparently genuine," he said. "Where did you get them?"

"I brought them from Mars," answered Llamkin.

"Smuggled in!" exclaimed the judge, his face growing hard with suspicion. "Undeclared valuables! Stolen directly from the mines in the first place, no doubt." The Federal appointment loomed suddenly nearer to the zealous magistrate.

"They were not mined," said Llamkin. "They were made."

"A likely story," replied the judge. "Because of the women involved in this Canary Club affair, I assess fines of ten dollars apiece and dismiss the case. As for you, Llamkin what's-your-name, I remand you to jail on the charge of

possessing smuggled, uncut diamonds. You will be held for investigation by the United States Customs Department. This property will be retained as evidence."

"Holy bell!" groaned Bill Grosset. "Why did all this have to happen to me?"

THE floor trembled as a bulky weight came stampeding along the central aisle. Charles J. Keene, dwarfing a pair of lawyers, had arrived.

"Here, here, your honor!" he called out. "Don't dismiss this case yet. You can't hold these men without bail. I demand to know the charges against them. I will go bond for them. What—"

"And who the devil are you?" interrupted Judge Martineau in his most majestic voice.

"I am Charles J. Keene, president of Rainbow Pellets. I demand my right as a property-holder to go bail. I demand that you assess a fine which I will pay here and now. I demand that you quash this entire ridiculous proceedings! I demand—"

"Hold everything!" shouted a new voice from the rear of the room. Every head twisted—even that of the Bullish Keene.

John Hartman and Colonel Henry Thomlinson were hastening into the courtroom. Trailing them was an angry looking sports reporter by the name of Louis Shayne.

Bang! Bang! Bang! In a frenzy of juridical rage, Judge Martineau beat futilely against the rising clamor from all sides. Everybody was talking and yelling at once. The gathering inside the railing was swelling to the size and violence of a mob. Only Llamkin remained calm. Standing against the judge's desk, hemmed in on all sides, he watched developments in grave-eyed amazement.

The abused gavel splintered. The judge began pounding with both fists to gain attention. Only the appearance of nightsticks in the hands of officers halted the tumult.

"And-so, Mr. Charles J. Keene," the judge continued shouting. "You admit being the employer and backer of this diamond smuggler, do you?"

"Diamond smuggler?" bellowed Keene. "What are you talking about?"

The meek Putnam finally gained his side and ear.

"That's right, C.J.," he squeaked. "This Lambkin fellow has a sackful of uncut diamonds that he smuggled into the United States from somewhere."

Keene's eyes threatened to squeeze out of his head. He envisioned a thousand kinds of complications all in the bulging of an eye. His color receded and his jaw dropped. But he recovered himself instantly.

"What diamond smuggler are you talking about?" he demanded of the judge on the bench. "I came here to free Putnam and Grosset, two valuable members of my organization. Get busy, Addison, Blake! What did I hire your firm for, anyhow?"

"I am referring to this—er—rainbow trout who calls himself Lambkin," grated the judge. "Evidence has already been offered that indicates—"

"Who? That nut!" The president of Rainbow Pellets pointed in mighty indignation and surprise. "I never saw the man before. I know nothing whatever about him."

"That's the smartest statement you ever made in your entire career, Keene," said John Hartman in a grim voice. "Are you swearing to that? You've made no attempt to kidnap, hire, lure, or bribe Lambkin?"

"Are you mad, Hartman?" demanded Keene virtuously. "I don't know the first thing about him."

Colonel Thomlinson climbed the dais and bent over to murmur in the distraught magistrate's ear.

"Accept that statement, Judge Martineau," he advised crisply. "Fine them and clear the courtroom."

JUDGE MARTINEAU stared at the influential colonel with glazing eyes. Here was one man whose name he didn't have to ask for. Colonel Thomlinson could make or break him.

"But—but, Colonel Thomlinson," he muttered incoherently, indicating the pile of bluish-gray pebbles before him. "I can't— That is, this Lambkin— These diamonds—smuggled. I can't—"

"Get rid of the night club crowd, quickly," explained the colonel. "We'll take up Lambkin's case afterward."

The judge reached for his gavel. It was no longer there. He finally pounded with his inkstand. The ink spilled over his hand and desk. When he banged the stand into the puddle, it splashed, of course. Blindly he put his hands in the mess and leaned forward tensely.

"Charges dismissed against all but Lambkin!" he grated hoarsely. "Sergeant, clear the court!"

Emile let out a wail. "But the r-r-ruined Canar-r-ry! What about the damages?"

"Get out," said Hartman, grabbing the head-waiter's shoulder. "Take these drunks with you. I'll fix up your damages."

Bluecoats peremptorily began clearing the court. Charles J. Keene halted in front of his advertising manager.

"You're fired, Grosset!" he stated savagely.

"He is not fired," contradicted Llamkin, stepping forward. "Make one move to oust Mr. Grosset, and I will appeal to the peculiar laws of your courts for redress. Mr. Grosset was acting under your orders when he requested me to accompany him. I will not see him suffer for it."

"What?" blurted Keene. "You—how—huh?"

"You heard me," said Llamkin in cold disgust. "Mr. Grosset, while I do not approve of your tactics, I admire your spirit. Those pictures you made at the Canary Club, you have my permission to use them as you wish. They belong to you, not to Rainbow Pellets."

"You have pictures?" demanded Keene of his advertising manager.

"I had everything in the bag," growled Mr. Grosset, "until that lunatic, Van Horst, started the fight."

"And we can use them?" Keene urged Llamkin.

"Mr. Grosset may use them," corrected Llamkin.

"Let's get back to the plant, Grosset," beamed the president. "I spoke hastily. I apologize. What were you saying?"

"I said," replied Bill Grosset promptly, "that I've got a headache no Rainbow Pellet will ever ease. Perhaps a salary raise might."

"I can cure it," agreed Mr. Keene.

"So long, Lambkin," said Grosset. "All I can say is that, nuts or not, you're a swell egg. It's been fun knowing you."

"Not so fast you two!" said John Hartman harshly. "Try to capitalize on this man's ignorance one inch, and I'll instigate a law suit that will turn Rainbow Pellets into poison."

"You're too late to kill the publicity now," said Louis Shayne. "Frank Bronson of the *Post-Times* ducked out of here as we came in. Kid, what did this Grosset do—hypnotize you?"

"Not at all," answered Llamkin. He explained, concluding: "It all seems juvenile to me, but if my endorsement will help Grosset, I see no reason for not giving it to him."

"Let 'em go, Mr. Hartman," advised Shayne. "They won't dare use any of the stuff they have until Lambkin gets clear of this Federal charge."

ELAINE ELLIOT stared at Llamkin with a hurt look in her black eyes. The man was utterly inexplicable to her.

"So you're a publicity agent, after all," she said bitterly.

Llamkin opened his mouth to protest, but his attention was called back to the judge's bench. Colonel Thomlinson had been talking with purpose and to the point. He had also signed a bond for the confused Judge Martineau.

"Here, Mr. Lambkin," said the magistrate. "Take your uncut diamonds back. I don't understand any single part of this entire mess. But Colonel Thomlinson vouches for you, and that is enough for me. Case is dismissed—er—I mean postponed. Court is adjourned. I'm going home and take an Alka-bromo."

"Perhaps you had better let me take charge of these stones," suggested Hartman. "Then there won't be any more trouble over them."

"Gladly," agreed Llamkin, turning the pouch over to the publisher.

"The stones came in handy at that," commented Colonel Thomlinson.

"They spiked Keene's guns We won't hear any more from Rainbow Pellets."

"But the damage has been done," growled Hartman. "Now, see here, Lambkin. You are going back to that hotel with Shayne, and you're going to stay with him. Understand? You do exactly what he tells you to do. Don't even talk to anybody unless you ask Shayne first. With the counsel of Weidmar, Strauss, and Caldwell, I think we can clean this mess up at a preliminary hearing. But I don't want any more nonsense."

"Mr. Hartman, I am not here to publicize Three Dimensional Pictures, either," protested Llamkin. "I am simply waiting for you to assemble your savants so I can—"

"You bet you're not!" agreed Colonel Thomlinson in his deep voice. "You sit tight while I arrange a meeting between you and certain authorities in Washington."

* * *

Down the street, after the last principals left the night court, an immaculately clad gentleman by the name of Dr. Percival Folkstone stepped into an all-night drugstore. He went into a telephone booth. He dialed a number, got a response, and spoke.

"Crown? This is Folkstone. Colonel Thomlinson just came to night court to get Lambkin out of a Federal smuggling charge and a five-thousand-dollar damage suit for wrecking the Canary Club."

"Ah!" came back the voice of the managing head of the Mammoth Mercantile Importing Company. "So! It is that important, eh? Very well, we will lay our plans. Transfer your attention from Thomlinson to the inventor."

CHAPTER XI

Getting Nowhere Fast

AFTER that wild nightmare, Louis Shayne had "day-jennies" for the rest of the week The first three days, particularly, were tough He had his hands full keeping Llamkin pacified and while he warded off the swarm of reporters, cranks and rubber-necks who tried to get to the Kid from Mars.

Inside of seventy-two hours Llamkin was receiving as much mail as a moderately successful cinema star. Shayne had a temporary secretary sent over from Hartman's main office to handle it —a man, because Llamkin apparently was susceptible to women, and vice versa. The secretary was installed in a hastily arranged office in the elevator foyer where he intercepted all mail and messages.

Dozens of letters solicited funds for every conceivable purpose. Seven invitations asked him to speak before clubs, besides half a dozen society invitations, two tentative offers of advertising jobs, three proposals of marriage, and one official document from the United States Government. This was an Immigration Department request for Mr. Khidmar Llamkin to show proof of American citizenship or, if foreign, to prove lawful entry.

Shayne got rid of that headache by turning the matter over to John Hartman. Through Colonel Thomlinson, the reporter knew, the technicality could be handled in Washington. It was really a shame, Shayne admitted to himself, to kill all this swell publicity. But the Kid from Mars had persisted in his denial of being the agent of any nationally known product or the emissary of any foreign power. Nobody stepped forward to claim him after the Rainbow fiasco. There was plenty of reason to play him down now. So the sports reporter clamped the iron hand of censorship on telephone, telegram, telecast, mail, and personal callers, while he strove to entertain and quiet his charge.

Needless to say, Llamkin didn't see any of this correspondence. Shayne breathed with relief when the flood slackened in a few days and he could dismiss the special secretary. It was a hectic period for the harassed Mr. Shayne.

Nor was this all Llamkin talked him dry on every subject about which the reporter had heard even a rumor. They reached an impasse only when Shayne, exhausted and crowded into a

corner of ignorance, resorted to a wisecrack to get out of the cul-de-sac.

This irrelevance never failed to puzzle Llamkin, who approached the most insignificant matter with the solemnity of an owl. At the same time, it was a constant source of amazement to the cynical reporter how much his companion knew in the abstract and yet how little he seemed to understand emotionally. If his mind had not been so alert and brilliant, Shayne would have called it bucolic naiveté. Actually it was as though Llamkin had studied life, people, history, and progress exhaustively, but isolated in some monastery.

Hinting about the revolutionary type of aircraft which had landed Llamkin at Meadowbrook, Shayne made no progress at all. It was not that Llamkin objected to talking on the subject or retreated suspiciously whenever Shayne mentioned it. On the contrary. But he always got to babbling some Martian nonsense that had the angry reporter completely at sea in no time.

The closest Shayne ever got to an intelligible description of the stratosphere craft was the morning Llamkin turned from the window. He had been staring down at the motor cars crawling like ants on the street far below. He started a discussion on the development of transportation by man.

HE listened attentively. Shayne gave a brief condensation of the subject from the crude sledges of cavemen down through the invention of the wheel, the domestication of animals, the development of steam and motors and, finally, the wing, the aerial propeller, and radial engines. Nor was water navigation neglected. Shayne had to describe it from the first floating log, to Diesel-motored battleships and submarines.

Whenever the reporter faltered or groped, Llamkin immediately prompted him with a shrewd question. It was with difficulty that Shayne rejected the sneaking idea that his listener was slyly ribbing him. But what lover of humor, from satire to horseplay—even a nut—would submit to a three-hour discourse about which he knew more than his lecturer, just for the sake of a joke?

"It is remarkable!" exclaimed Llamkin at last, his fine blue eyes almost sparkling. His firm lips were parted in his nearest approach to a smile that Shayne had yet seen. "If I had had the slightest doubt of the common origin of Earthmen and Martians, this would have made me discard it. Step for step, making allowances for the different planetary environments, you have related the history of Martian man's conquest of transportation—as far as Earthmen have advanced, of course. Or have they gone further?"

"So that's your explanation of how you know so much about it."

Shayne smiled cynically. "No wonder Professor Strauss gave up. Are you kidding me, Kid? You know damned well we haven't got any further—until you came along with your new stratosphere ship. We've only been experimenting with rocket propulsion, so far. You've solved it."

"Oh, yes, we solved rocket propulsion long ago," Llamkin dismissed the subject casually. "But you labor under a misapprehension, Louis. My vehicle is not a stratosphere rocket craft. It is a space ship."

"Grab your hats, boys," said Shayne aloud. "Here we go again. All right, it's a space ship. I don't give a damn what you call it. But what makes it go?"

"Not rockets. The problem of weight and bulk of fuel precluded that."

"You mean you haven't reached atomic energy yet?" asked the reporter in mock surprise.

"Of course we have, long ago. Practically all machinery on Mars is powered by atomic motors. But the navigation of space, Louis, requires more than blind energy. There is the inflexible law of gravitation, not to mention three-dimensional navigation between worlds that have spatial movements of their own. Briefly, the principle by which my ship functions is the power to reverse the poles of gravity.

"Instead of a given planet attracting a body thus magnetized, it repels it. By setting my gravitators against the pull of the planet I am on, and toward any given celestial body, I can navi-

gate my vessel through space. I change my variables occasionally to guide my course. You grasp the essential idea, do you not?"

"I do not," said Shayne bluntly. "Why the rockets, then?"

"For emergency, though I didn't need them then. When I show you the interior of my ship, I can explain more fully. I think I shall extend you, for purely personal reasons, an invitation to accompany me to Mars. Of course I will return you to Earth. Until then, I can best describe my ship's motive power by saying that I use the force of gravity for flight, building up varying speeds by the various combinations of gravity repellents and attractants on my control keyboard."

"THANKS for the ride," said Shayne dryly. "You mean the gimmicks on your belt?"

"No. My belt merely raises and lowers the ship short distances by remote control. The keyboard is inflexibly set on an Earth constancy right now. The nearest comparison I can think of, at the moment, is that it faintly resembles the banks of manuals on your larger pipe organs."

"Music of the spheres," commented Shayne ironically.

"In a manner of speaking, yes," agreed Llamkin gravely. "Now do you understand?"

"Perfectly—and I am the reincarnation of Sir Isaac Newton."

"I beg your pardon?" Llamkin was immediately puzzled. "How do you arrive at that extraneous conclusion? Isaac Newton was the first Earthman to propound the law of gravity. He corresponds to the Martian scientist, Keud Dlanod, who lived nearly thirty thousand tenarcks ago. That would be approximately fifty thousand of your Earth years. But I do not understand your deduction.

"Reincarnation . . . Let me see . . . That comes under the head of theism . . . It fits into one of your Earthly theologies . . . Reincarnation—transmigration of souls—Buddhism! But, Louis, I fail to see the connection. Do you subscribe to the teachings of this Guatama Siddhartha, surnamed Buddha, who—"

"Skip it," retorted Shayne. "It's a family secret."

The arrival of the tailor with a complete outfit, including half a dozen suits and a flamboyant tuxedo in pastel shades, rescued them from the theosophic morass into which they had floundered. And all Shayne had learned about the stratosphere ship was a generalization on gravity and an invitation to make a round trip to Mars. A hell of a report to submit to John Hartman, an offensively militant realist.

Llamkin became enthralled with Earthly sartorial splendor. He submitted to the fussing of the tailor, who wanted to be satisfied with the final fitting before he would take his departure. Llamkin's interest in garters, suspenders, cuff links, and other trappings, was lively. The tailor began volunteering fragments of information on such details as how buttons came to be on coat sleeves, and why the lapel was notched. When at last he took his okayed bill from Shayne for Hartman

[*Turn page*]

and departed, Llamkin turned to the reporter.

"Interesting," he said. "A well informed man. Are all the tradesmen as well versed in the history of their professions?"

"That crackpot probably reads the liquor ads for his dope. Or maybe the 'Strange If You Believe It' feature in the papers."

"Liquor ads? Dope? That, of course, would be the quaint slang phraseology which we discussed as an odd offshoot of the English language, but—"

"Don't go into a tail-spin. I'm sorry I mentioned it. Climb into that haunting dinner outfit again. We have a double date today, you know—a matinee and then a dinner engagement with Elaine Elliot. We won't have time to change later."

"Oh, yes, that comedy-drama you are going to show me. And then, the charming Elaine."

"Yeah," grunted Shayne sourly. "This will be your first real night out since that girlish escapade with Bill Grosset. I want you to behave."

"I'm sorry about that," said Llamkin as he obeyed instructions. "Perhaps it is because I do not understand your way of life that I cause so much trouble."

"Let it lay," Shayne replied wearily. "You'll see real people this time. Maybe you'll get it. Just want you to keep trying."

The reporter proceeded then with his own dressing. He returned his attention to his companion in time to see Llamkin struggling manfully with his final adjustments.

"Here," said Shayne impatiently. "Let me tie that bow for you. The guy who invented bow-ties should have strangled himself with it before springing it on us. And take off that Buck Rogers belt! Haven't you done enough to make yourself ridiculous, trotting around like a one-man band?"

Llamkin gulped in dismay. "But, Louis, I don't dare let this belt out of my possession. I am willing to lay aside my customary attire—even my induction helmet. But I must guard my ship control."

"Where the hell is that crazy ship of yours? And don't tell me it's just drifting around in the stratosphere, waiting for you to call it down."

"Exactly. And if I lost this belt, I would be lost indeed."

"Well, you can't wear it, and that's flat. How about disconnecting it so nobody else can monkey with it?"

"But suppose somebody removed it?" Llamkin asked.

"We'll lock it in the wall safe. Or hide it under your mattress."

"That is an odd idea, but it gives me a good one," said Llamkin, his eyes brightening. "I can hide it. Wait here."

He hurried into his own bedroom. He was gone only a minute. When he returned, a couple of his pockets bulged slightly. But he was minus the belt, apparently.

"That's better," approved the reporter. "You're not fooling me, though. You've got the damned thing on under your clothes. Our tailor friend would have a hemorrhage if he could see you, but at least it's out of sight."

CHAPTER XII

Experiment in Laughter

THE show they went to was a flop. Shayne had already seen it, and Llamkin couldn't detect anything funny in it.

It was a disgusted sports reporter who led his companion into the cocktail lounge, on the mezzanine of the Telecast Plaza, at seven o'clock.

However, the pride and joy of Three Dimensional Pictures was waiting for them, and not too happy about the whole thing. She was talking with Maurice Rynder, but she wasn't complaining. She had her orders from Maurice, and Maurice had his from John Hartman.

Neither of them recognized Shayne's companion for a moment.

"Why, Mr. Llamkin!" beamed the fat but immaculate vice-president suddenly. "You look elegant. Shayne

certainly is the man to show you the ropes. Eh, Shayne?"

"He's got me hanging onto them," growled the reporter. "Good evening, Miss Elliot. So we meet again. A positively minute world, isn't it?"

Elaine was lovely in one of those strapless evening gowns of pale blue and gold which display perfect shoulders and make men hold their breaths. Her makeup was just right. Her coiffure must have caused herself and the French hair-dresser of the Plaza salon a couple of hours of exquisite agony. Her general ensemble was marvelous. Yet Elaine gave the reporter a very ugly look out of her Kolsord blossom eyes. (The simile was Llamkin's.)

"So I have you to thank for this charming evening, Mr. Shayne," she murmured in a voice that dripped sweet poison.

"Some people," observed Shayne, glancing at Rynder, "talk too much. We all have our cross to bear. Maybe a round of cocktails will lighten the burden. Will you order, Rynder?"

Llamkin had kept his attention turned solely to the girl. The significance of the by-play escaped him. As he bowed before her, he spoke only two words, and then simply repeated them.

"You're lovely," he said. "You're lovely!"

With those words he again threw that spell over them, that bewitching something they had felt at Meadowbrook days before. Distinctly there was a charm about the Kid from Mars that wasn't met at every kaffee-klatsch of café society.

On the magical wings of the music from the concealed orchestra—they were playing "Stardust"—all four of them were transported to the plane where all things are possible and all dreams come true.

For the first time in her smart and sophisticated young life, Elaine Elliot experienced a distinct heart throb. It didn't frighten her until late that night.

Alone, save for her maid and her companion-secretary, in the imperial suite which was the west penthouse, she prepared for bed. Sitting before her dressing table and brushing her glossy raven hair, she came to her

senses. She stared with horror at her reflection in the mirror.

"Now what in the name of hell was the matter with me? Was I hypnotized? Falling under the phony spell of a cracked inventor just because he looks like a Greek god and talks like a Persian poet!"

But that, of course, came much later. Just now she felt as though she were suddenly strolling in a fairy garden of enchantment. She waded through gorgeously queer flowers, was dizzied by exotic and exciting perfumes, while jeweled nightingales sang heart-aching threnodies of love and despair.

She saw this strange man, Llamkin, with clearer eyes than when she had first beheld him in his outré garb on the polo field. Yet, paradoxically, he seemed less substantial and distinct.

TWO rounds of cocktails and four courses of dinner came and passed into oblivion with only Shayne and Rynder being any the wiser—or poorer. The music shifted from Johann Strauss to Victor Herbert. It was impossible to make small talk with Llamkin, and Elaine frankly said so.

"Then don't," he answered softly. "I wouldn't understand, anyway. I try so hard, but things of the lighter vein escape me, perhaps for that very

reason. Yet I am not despondent nor gloomy. I simply do not understand how to isolate and analyze that quality for which I seek."

"You certainly are an unusual man, Mr. Lambkin," she said, a trifle unsteadily. "What on Earth makes you so sober?"

"Nothing on Earth," he assured her earnestly, his melodic voice blending with the dreamy background of the music. "It is the heritage of ten thousand years. Think of it, Elaine! Imagine a world, strangely different from this, and yet beautiful in its own alien way. Think of a whole race of grave, intelligent people who are far advanced in the arts and sciences. They have advanced so far that certain fundamental qualities have been lost from their personalities, and they are unaware of their loss.

"Theirs is a dying world, Elaine, but unified work and intelligently directed effort will save it. The great scientists know how, and they cannot induce the people to follow their lead. There is no concern for the slow death of a once fair world, for what is death but a mere state of transition? There is no will to struggle, no incentive, no ambition to progress still further.

"The men of that world have reached a condition of mental apathy, an appalling indifference to the course of destiny. What is this priceless, vital spark that is lacking? They have lost their sense of humor. On Xzorculu, no man has even smiled for more than five thousand years. They have forgotten how."

For the moment Elaine permitted herself to be swept along on this stream of pensive fancy. She permitted herself this poignant peek at the fabulous city of Xanadu. Again the fair Elaine—Elaine, the Lily maid of Astolat—was adrift in her barge upon the waters of poetic prose.

"How terrible!" she whispered. "Have they no hearts, these men of Xzorculu? Are there no women there? No children? No things of joy and beauty? No—no music? Listen to that! 'Ah, Sweet Mystery of Life.' With music like that, how can man fail to conquer his environment?"

Llamkin studied her rapt face in secret amazement. Was this the double-talk Louis Shayne had meant?

"Yes," he murmured, sighing faintly. "They have all of those things, even music. But the vital fire is missing. Their music has rhythm, of course—rhythm set to mathematics. It has no soul. What was that music being played when we met in the cocktail lounge?"

"'Stardust,'" answered Elaine dreamily.

"How symbolic!" he said, repeating the title. "How beautiful! I wonder, Louis, if it might be played again."

Shayne welcomed his rescue from the production figures and expense panegyrics of Maurice Rynder. Rynder may have had an interesting viewpoint of his own, but the sports reporter couldn't find it.

"Yes," he said, looking at his watch. It was time to report to his boss. "I'll see to it. Excuse me for a few minutes."

HE passed on the request for a repetition of "Sturdust" and found a telephone booth. It didn't take him long to report the day's summary to the publisher.

"And that's all you can give me on the sixth day?" said Hartman in heavy sarcasm. "I thought you were an ace reporter!"

"I never qualified as an attendant in a bughouse," Shayne rejoined hotly. "I can't make this guy out. I'm beginning to believe we didn't even see that ship of his. We're the ones who are crazy."

"Quite so," was the acid response. "In the face of what you just told me about that two-way radio belt of his—that he even sleeps with it strapped around him so he can stay in touch with his crew. You are with him constantly, and you can't even catch him in communication with his assistants. Six days at an expense of better than a hundred dollars a day, not counting your salary and bonus—and all you get is an invitation to Mars!"

"I can't help it!" snapped Shayne. "Why pick on me? I've kept everybody else away from him, haven't I?

And you didn't do so hot that first night with your three trained seals of science. I didn't claim to be a scientific man, but Lambkin is making me believe I'm a helluva lot better informed than I thought I was. I'm taking him to that Broadway hit, 'Hades, With Popcorn,' tomorrow night. So I won't be able to report until after midnight. He's still diligently searching for humor, and he's getting restless about that scientific meeting, too."

There was no answer to this, and Shayne jiggled the telephone hook.

"Mr. Hartman? Are you still there?"

"Yes," came back the deep, measured tones of the publisher. "I was just thinking. Keep up your work. You never can tell when something will break. That's all. Good night."

Shayne returned to the dining room just in time to hear the closing strains of the request number. To his stark shock, he saw Elaine and Llamkin gliding together across the dance floor.

In the manner of a small boy carefully holding a kitten, Llamkin's arm gently enfolded the girl. Their eyes were locked, as though a magnetic bond had drawn them together.

"More gravity," the reporter muttered sourly. "The Kid from Mars had better turn off his pipe organ control."

"What did you say?" asked Maurice Ryndor, turning his head as Shayne resumed his seat. "Don't they make a handsome couple together? I didn't know Mr. Lambkin could dance."

"Don't bother your head about him," advised Shayne. "You're better than I am at finance, so you take the check."

Later, as they were retiring, Llamkin spoke sadly to the reporter.

"I still cannot see humor in the things you tell me are funny, Louis. I just don't understand it. They can't be very comical, for even you do not laugh. Come to think of it, you seldom laugh, Louie. Is humor an elusive will-o'-the-wisp for you, too?"

"Lately, it's been too much of an effort," admitted Shayne.

"Elaine!" breathed Llamkin as he removed his trousers.

He stood holding them in his hand, a ludicrous athletic figure in his shirt tail, shorts, gartered socks and shoes. Shayne had to concede that the Kid from Mars looked better in his Martian outfit than in partial modern dress.

"Elaine!" repeated Llamkin. "You know, Louie, the only part of the day that seemed worthwhile to me was the time I spent with Elaine Elliot. I've never danced before in my life, but I believe I could dance on with her forever."

"You should have visited America during the marathon craze," said Shayne. "At that, you're showing sense if not humor."

CHAPTER XIII

The Snatch

SHAYNE began to have qualms of uneasiness when Llamkin started looking at him in the middle of the first act of "Hades, with Popcorn." The academic altercation began between them during the first intermission. With allowances for the various logical interruptions, it kept on until they stepped into the taxicab after their visit to the Harlem night club.

"This—this spectacle," said Llamkin gravely. "Is it really supposed to be funny?"

"You see everybody around you roaring with laughter, don't you?" pointed out Shayne. "It *is* funny. Even I will admit it. That comedian could make a corpse laugh at his own funeral. He combines minute observation and a touch of pathos with sophistry. In short, he's a plain slapstick artist."

"But I am not laughing," mourned Llamkin. "What you point out as comical seems either perfectly logical or perfectly silly to me. For instance, why don't the actors confine their incomprehensible antics to the stage? Their constant running out into the audience made for greater confusion. And forcing a spectator to accept a block of ice—when he insisted that his home was equipped with electric refrigeration—struck me as being most annoying."

"It was annoying to that man. That's what made it funny to everybody else. It was a joke. Even the victim understood that. And it was harmless. No sensible person likes harmful practical jokes."

"I grant you that it was harmless enough. But what was funny about it?"

"The absurdity of it," snorted Shayne. "If it had been logical, it wouldn't have been funny. The very refusal of the actors to recognize a barrier between stage and audience makes the business shockingly funny. That might be termed the incongruity of fixed ideas. Just like an actor in a cos-

tume play of, say, ancient Rome, walking out onto the stage, wearing shoes of the twentieth century. That would bring down the house because it would be an anachronism.

"I once saw a performance of 'Hamlet' in which the shoes worn by the ghost squeaked loudly when he walked. Ghostly apparitions don't wear shoes. This was concrete evidence that he did, and was therefore material. The actors went on pretending to believe he was a disembodied spirit. The audience fell into the aisles."

"I don't see it," said Llamkin. "He wasn't really a spirit. Why shouldn't the embarrassing squeak have been overlooked? As for the anachronism you suggest, that could never happen upon a Martian stage—if the theater were still extant on Mars."

"I can well believe it," said Shayne shortly. The reporter with increasing frequency found himself accepting the Martian premise unconsciously. He often surprised himself by arguing against it as if it were an actual fact. "Would you have thought it funny if the guy who got the ice suddenly pulled out glasses, liquor and a bottle of vichy and proceeded to mix drinks?"

"No. Would you?"

"Certainly. Say, it isn't bad. Maybe I can do something with it. You see, that would've turned the gag on the comedian, who would've laughed louder than anybody else."

"I would have thought that the sensible thing to do," said Llamkin. "It would have utilized the melting ice."

SHAYNE waved his hands wildly in defeat.

"You're impossible!"

"But I'm not. I am only trying to see what is funny. You say a thing is comical. But when we analyze it, it proves to be simply stupid. Let us consider that line which caused a gale of laughter in the second act. It struck me as being irrelevant. 'Confucius say, man who kiss girl on hillside not on level.' Explain that to me."

"That's a play on words or phrases which have a double meaning. 'Not on the level' is a slang term which means that such a person is dishonest. It also means that a hillside, being an inclined plane out of the horizontal, is not on the level."

"Your second explanation is obvious, and I will concede the first. But what is pleasant or comical about a man having dishonorable intentions toward a woman?"

"Damn it, that isn't the funny part!" howled Shayne. "Only the ludicrous combination is funny. Tear anything to pieces the way you do, and it's as flat as a day-old pancake."

"I think so, too," solemnly agreed Llamkin. "And why the vague reference to Confucius? He was a profoundly humanitarian Chinese phil-

osopher of about twenty-five hundred years ago. And why the clipped style of speech?"

"Association of ideas," explained Shayne patiently. "Confucius made pertinent observations. These new wisecracks are pseudo-sage reflections. So they are attributed to him. The clipped wording comes from what is termed pidgin English — a style of speech employed by a few Chinese and all movie writers."

"Thus, it seems that the entire conclusion is shakily built on a number of uncorrelated premises," observed Llamkin. "Why, therefore, is it funny?"

"To people like you it isn't. It depends on the knowledge of the listener. The average human being has a sufficient fund of miscellaneous information to enable him to correlate all or most of the points covered in a joke. The speed of it is generally the important thing. If he has to stop laboriously, figure it out, the joke falls flat. Sometimes the audience figures it out swiftly, and it still falls flat. That is what is known professionally as laying an egg."

"Wait a minute!" exclaimed Llamkin. "The humor of any given situation does not depend on the antics or words of the performer, but upon the receptivity of his audience?"

"My God, you've got it!" cried Shayne in mock triumph. "Nothing is particularly funny about a comedian —in himself. Nothing is funny about a good story with a twist or a ludicrous situation or anything like that—in itself. It always depends on the point of view of the listener or the reader. Everybody doesn't laugh at everything that passes for humor. But everybody laughs at *something*. It is a universal trait. Without it, man would be lost, drowned in his own melancholy."

"That is what I have been trying to make you see," said Llamkin. "The men of Mars are drowning in their own melancholy. But we are not gloomy people. We simply don't see the funny side of things. The point of view . . . perhaps if I could apply that principle to the familiar things of Mars, I could comprehend what you mean. On Earth, it is pointless to me. I must give it some thought."

SHAYNE expelled his breath with relief.

"I'm glad that argument is settled. I'm damned if I see anything funny about it, myself. If you've had enough of this night club, suppose we try something else. I've done my best for you. It's up to you to find something to start laughing about. It's your funeral."

"I fail to see anything to promote risibility about a funeral. But I am grateful for what you have done, Louis. Perhaps, with the other part of my mission accomplished, you have helped Mars more than we know."

"Back on the merry-go-round," observed Shayne as he paid the check. "Let's go, Horatio."

"Why do you call me that?"

"There seem to be more things in heaven and hell than were dreamt of in your philosophy."

"I never doubted it," said Llamkin.

Shayne handed their hat checks to the beauty of the cloakroom.

"Perhaps I should have called you Yorick."

"Ah!" nodded Llamkin, his face brightening. "I comprehend your allusion. 'Hamlet' again—Shakespeare!"

"Screeno!" said Shayne. "And shake a leg."

The braided doorman under the canopy hailed a taxi for them. The reporter ushered Llamkin inside the cab. He followed closely on his heels—to find the cab uncomfortably crowded.

A gun was jammed into his ribs hard enough to make him grunt. The cab door slammed. They streaked from the curb.

"A stick-up!" yelled Shayne.

"Stow it, lug!" snarled a harsh voice. "Take it easy and you won't get hurt. Let out a single yowl, and I'll bang your brains down your throat. How's his nibs doing, Marlowe?"

"Quiet as a lamb."

Shayne went rigid all over at the mention of that name. He placed "Chick" Diller and "Soapy" Marlowe, as vicious a pair of crooks as still roamed the jungles of Manhattan.

Diller, tall, thin, and wiry as a steel cable had been a torpedo in the old beer baronial days. How he had escaped the general holocaust and withstood

the present legal and economic pressure, nobody knew. Shayne realized he would hood for anybody who flashed enough of the stuff it takes.

Marlowe, big, hearty, bubbling over with fake good humor, was an artist in in soap. He used soap to seal the cracks of safes he intended blowing, for making neat impressions of keys and other things. And he soft-soaped prospective victims.

"Don't start anything, Kid," Shayne warned quickly. "Everything will be all right."

"Of course," answered Llamkin's calm voice. "But why is it necessary for all of us to sit on one seat?"

"Funny chap, aren't you?" chuckled Marlowe

"Wise guy!" snapped Diller. "Don't take any chances with him."

"I never take chances," was Marlowe's pleasantly grim response.

"All right, Diller," said Shayne soothingly. "You've got us. I didn't know you went in for small-time heisting, but you never can tell in this changing world. My wallet is in my inside breast pocket. The Kid hasn't any dough on him."

"Shut up!" rasped Diller. "So you know me, smart guy? Well, this ain't a heist. It's a snatch. And whether you come out of it safely depends on how you behave."

LOUIS SHAYNE subsided in his crowded corner. He thought harder and faster than he had ever thought in his life. The gloom of the cab was eerily lifted only by the occasional pallid glow of the street lights which the taxi passed. The reporter's bitter conclusion was that he had failed Hartman a second time, and had finally got Llamkin into a bad jam.

For there was no doubt in the sports reporter's mind that they had been kidnaped at the instigation of some European or Asiatic espionage agent. Such a spectacular demonstration as Llamkin had staged at Meadowbrook couldn't have gone unheeded by other interests than the Hartman combine.

So now Llamkin's fun and frolic was over. If he persisted in his Martian act, he was due for a violent awakening. He stood to have his invention wrested from him for nothing, his throat cut, and his body dropped in the bay wearing a suit of concrete. The best he could hope for was confinement in a concentration camp until he revealed all the details of his stratosphere ship. And just where did that leave the man who had been the inventor's intimate for a week or more? Shayne groaned.

"Bellyache?" sneered Diller.

"Well, it's something I can't digest," admitted Shayne ruefully.

"A gastric disturbance," observed Llamkin sagely. "Do you know, a study of the entomology of words in the English language would be of absorbing interest. I only wish—"

"Nuts!" cut in Diller savagely. "Button your lip, or I'll give you both some hot lead you couldn't begin to digest."

"I don't like the tone of your voice, Mr. Diller," said Llamkin, his own voice taking a metallic edge. "And there is the implication of a threat in your words. If—*Ooff!*" He broke off with a gasp as his own captor jabbed him deeper with a gun.

"Take it easy, Kid!" pleaded Shayne. "We're in a jam."

"Oh, of course—I forgot," agreed Llamkin mildly, relaxing. "But I consider this in rather poor taste, Louis."

This brought another chuckle out of Soapy Marlowe.

"Isn't it, just? And it isn't polite to point, but pardon the snoot of my gun."

The taxi driver twisted his head and spoke out of the corner of his mouth.

"Almost there, Diller."

"Okay," said the leader of the trio. "Now listen, you two guys. Where we're taking you ain't none of your business. So are you gonna be good boys while we blindfold you, or do you want to be sapped?"

"Sapped?" questioned Llamkin.

"Knocked on the head," translated Shayne swiftly. "We'll take the blindfold."

"Just as you say," was Llamkin's docile agreement.

All the reporter knew was that the cab was approaching the lower East Side and working over toward the river. More than this he could not ascertain before Diller produced a piece of heavy,

dark material from his pocket. Shayne was wondering how the crook expected to keep him under a gun and blindfold him at the same time.

"Take it and put it on," his captor ordered. "It's a black hood, but you won't suffocate. And no funny moves."

"The same goes for you, pal," Marlowe said to Llamkin. "Put on your thinking cap. It won't come down below your chin."

IN reluctant silence, Shayne complied. From the sounds in the opposite corner he knew that Llamkin was obligingly doing the same. There was silence for a few minutes.

Then the cab rumbled over rough cobblestones, turned left down a sharp incline, and halted with a ratlike squealing of brakes. The tonneau door on Llamkin's side opened. They saw light being flashed into the car, below their loose hoods.

"Get out first, Marlowe," directed Diller. "Caroll, open the door."

The jingle of keys preceded the clicking of a lock. The smell and raw feel of water told Shayne they must be close to the East River. But he could hear none of the usual river sounds. Without being able to see, he understood that in a few moments.

In single file a gun in each of their backs, the two prisoners were ordered to march ahead. They crossed the threshold of the building. The door was closed and locked behind them. The never-to-be forgotten smell of a warehouse swept under his hood and reached the reporter's nostrils. He counted mentally when they were marched nearly a hundred steps along. They halted while one of their captors knocked at a wooden door.

"Enter," bade a gruff and obviously disguised voice.

There was plenty of light about them as the two prisoners were conducted forward and halted.

"Very well," spoke the gruff voice again. "Unhood them."

The gun pressure at their backs relaxed. Unseen hands snatched the obscuring hoods from their heads. They blinked uncertainly in the bright light.

Shayne knew they were at the rear office of a huge warehouse of some sort, perhaps even out over the water. Gradually he became used to the light. He observed that it shone full upon them from a cone reflector just above their heads, throwing the rest of the room in semi-shadow. The three kidnapers arranged themselves behind the captives automatic pistols in hand. . . .

CHAPTER XIV

Unwilling Victim

BUT is was the fantastic scene before them that riveted Shayne's attention. Behind a long wooden table, well back from the cone of brilliant light, sat two men. Their hands, white and rather ghastly against their somber black garb, were in view on the table. Their heads and torsos were mantled by one-piece hoods and capes, only there were eye holes in the hoods and a white swastika was painted on the

[*Turn page*]

breast of each cape.

"Off with the old hood, on with the new," observed Shayne sardonically. "What is this—a game?"

There was no immediate response to this. Two pairs of eyes stared coldly at the prisoners through the holes in the masking hoods, glittering in the light that reached them. There was no sound but the heavy breathing of a crook behind them, and the faint *lap-lap* of river water against piling.

Llamkin, whose uncertain reaction to this business Shayne was anxious to know, appeared quite at ease. He stood beside the reporter. Perfectly balanced on his feet, shoulders thrown back, blondish-red hair boyishly tousled, he looked as utterly self-possessed as though he had just stepped out of a Fifth Avenue men's shop. His hat, of course, had been left behind in the taxicab.

Then the heavier of the two seated hoods spoke for the first time. His voice was guttural and cold as the North Sea.

"It is the game of war, gentlemen," he said in precise English, with just a trace of Germanic accent. "We regret the necessity of bringing you here in such a manner, but it was unavoidable. We are men of few words and I will state our proposition briefly. Kindly pay close attention.

"You, *Herr* Lamchen, are the inventor of a new design of airship. It is our purpose to examine this craft immediately. If it is so good as the report of our agents leads us to believe, you will be offered a fair price for the plans and this model of your invention. If it is not, you will be released without harm. It will be necessary for you to accompany the persuasive gentlemen behind you by boat.

"An isolated spot has been selected out on Long Island. You are to radio your ship to meet us there so our experts can examine it. It is up to you whether you will agree to this willingly or whether we shall be compelled to use force. It is optional whether or not you wish to take your companion, *Herr* Shayne, along with you."

His voice ceased, and there was expectant silence. If he had thought Llamkin was going to protest or agree, he was disappointed. Llamkin remained mute.

"It sounds like a secret lodge initiation, Kid," said Shayne. "But the identity of these tough eggs behind us tells me it's the real McCoy."

Llamkin remained silent. He merely shifted his troubled blue eyes from the hooded figures to the natty sports reporter. The slenderer of the hooded men cleared his throat.

"Come, come," he said in his harsh, disguised voice. "What is your answer? Be quick!"

IT was Shayne again who broke the silence.

"What is the alternative if Lamkin refuses to be intimidated?"

"A few hours in the hands of Diller and Marlowe will make him beg to talk. I would regret to be forced to use such harsh methods as they are capable of devising. Hurry, *Herr* Lamchen, and give me your answer. Time is flying.

"Will you demonstrate your ship willingly, or do we use unpleasant methods?"

Llamkin fixed his eyes accusingly on Shayne.

"Don't you think this has gone far enough? I still do not have the right point of view. It isn't funny."

"Funny?" gasped Shayne. "You're damned right it isn't funny! We're up against a murderous spy crowd who won't be interested in your Martian fairy tale." He edged closer and lowered his voice pleadingly. "Better kid 'em along for the present. Maybe we can turn the tables—"

"Kindly let *Herr* Lamchen answer for himself!" rapped out the hood with the guttural voice.

Llamkin's eyes seemed to cloud over with disappointment, as though Shayne had missed his cue somehow—or played him false. He turned and faced the hooded pair.

"No," he said flatly. "I will show you nothing before I address a conclave of Earth scientists."

The heavier of the two men shook visibly with fury. The other raised his hand in a signal to the three waiting crooks behind the prisoners. Shayne

noticed the gleam of an opal ring upon his middle finger.

"Search him!" ordered Guttural Voice. "He wears his radio communication belt constantly on his person. Strip it from him. Perhaps that will loosen his tongue."

Before either of the two prisoners could move, Diller and Marlowe leaped upon Llamkin. Savagely they twisted his arms behind him.

Shayne tensed his own muscles in involuntary protest. He heard Llamkin's tendons crack and his breath hiss between his lips at the sudden pain. The thug named Caroll shoved his gun viciously into the reporter's left kidney.

"Don't move!" he snarled. "I'll spill your nasty red blood all over that nice blue dinner jacket."

His face draining, Llamkin came up on his toes and then settled slowly back on his heels in the grip of the two torpedoes. Swiftly Diller shifted his hold. Marlowe gripped both of Llamkin's wrists in one powerful bam of an band and held Llamkin in a stranglehold with his other arm. Diller moved in front to rip open the captive's jacket and shirt.

In spite of this painful position, Llamkin spoke distinctly.

"Louis," he said in a deadly voice. "I never thought you, of all men, were of the mental caliber to stoop to such trickery. Why do you seek to do this to me?"

HIS strange words, the very bitterness of his voice, momentarily halted the hands of Chick Diller. The crook stared at Llamkin's face through narrowed and puzzled eyes.

"I?" exclaimed Shayne in stark bewilderment. "What the hell are you talking about?"

"I thought it was simply one of those incongruous situations you had arranged for me. Now it looks like treachery of some sort."

"Are you crazy, Kid?" panted Shayne. "These hoodlums are going to kill us both, if you don't give up, or I can't talk or buy our way out of this hole."

"You mean you have nothing to do with this?" demanded Llamkin.

"Of course not!" groaned the reporter. "This gorilla's got a gun buried so deep in my back right now, it feels like it's sprouting."

"Ah!" breathed Llamkin as Chick Diller growled in his throat and ruthlesaly ripped open his shirt with fingers of steel. "Why didn't you say in the first place that these men were not your friends?"

And a miracle came to pass Before Diller could more than hook his fingers in Llamkin's silk undershirt, the Kid from Mars expanded his huge chest. His strained arm muscles went as rigid as iron bars. Even the powerful Marlowe could not move them in any direction.

Suddenly he stooped, dragging the astounded Marlowe irresistibly over with him. The crook's grip slipped helplesaly on those steel wrists. He released his hold and lashed out wildly to keep from falling.

Instantly Llamkin's arms whipped around, locked behind his head in a terrible hug about Marlowe's neck. He rose to his feet with a sinuous shudder that was almost reptilian, and heaved.

The bulky Marlowe went catapulting over his head in an involuntary somersault. He crashed squarely down upon Diller's head. The pair of criminals collapsed, senaeless, to the floor.

"Well, I'll be a—" mouthed Caroll in startled terror.

He jerked his gun around in a short arc to blast Llamkin down.

That was all Shayne needed. He pivoted on his heel, brought his fist up in a reckless hook. But it caught the chauffeur under the jaw with enough force to lift him to his toes. The gun roared once as Caroll dropped it. The bullet went wild.

Before the chauffeur could even start falling, Llamkin reached out and plucked him bodily off his feet. He hurled him like a javelin at the two hooded figures, who were leaping erect in fright.

The three of them went down behind the table in a tangled snarl of confusion. Shayne snatched Caroll's dropped automatic. He grabbed Llamkin's arm just in time to prevent the raging Kid from diving headlong across the table. It

was like grabbing a bar of iron, and he was nearly jerked off his feet.

"Nix, Kid, nix!" he sobbed out. "Lay off! It's time to go. Let's get out of here before more rats come out of their holes."

The wild glare of battle faded from Llamkin's eyes. He was a magnificent figure in the ruins of his dress shirt and dinner jacket. But he was sane.

"All right," he agreed coolly.

Without another glance at the havoc he had wrought, he turned and opened the door. He led the way unerringly along the path they had trod blindfolded.

WITH the sense of a homing pigeon, he found his way through the dark straight to the door which had admitted them. Here Llamkin was temporarily stopped by the barrier. Angry yells pursued them.

"It's barred," panted Shayne, thrusting the gun into Llamkin's hand. "Hold 'em off. Shoot to kill. I'll get the door open."

"But I can't do that," protested Llamkin. "Murder is not my purpose on Earth."

"Damn you and your purpose!" growled Shayne, feeling frantically for the bar in the darkness. "Those krauts are playing for keeps."

They certainly were. A whistle shrilled at the rear of the great warehouse. A string of naked light bulbs came to life overhead, making the vast structure a haunted place of dim light and gloomy shadows. Like a pack of rats, the reserve minions of the two hooded men swarmed down on the fugitives.

"Do not kill them!" came the shouted order from the rear. The heavy-set man, still hooded, came running forward. "Take them alive!"

He whipped off his hood impatiently, the better to see. Shayne, had whirled about and placed his back to the door. He let out a whistle of amazement. He recognized the spy leader as George Crown head of the Mommoth Mercantile Importing Company. Crown's careless unveiling meant a graver and more significant thing. The reporter and Llamkin were not intended to live any great length of time, captured alive at this moment or not.

But there was no time for speculation. The dozen ruffians were upon them. Ostensibly warehouse employees of this going concern, they were plainly agents of the espionage ring that had its particular head in George Crown. The reporter knew the country was rife with spies. But he had given the problem little concern, content to leave such things to the F.B.I. It had become a personal matter at a decidedly awkward moment.

Shayne had not seen Llamkin at work in the Canary Club. Neither had the thugs. Contemptuously thrusting into his pocket the automatic Shayne had handed him, Llamkin leaped to meet the charge.

As the foremost spy aimed a blow at him, Llamkin side-stepped and deftly caught the fellow's wrist. He jerked the extended arm across his shoulder as he turned his back. He gave a slight heave. The screaming victim hurtled over his head to crash into the barred door and drop, bleeding and senseless, to the concrete floor.

Shayne luckily staggered back the second attacker.

"For God's sake!" he panted. "If you're not going to use it, give me that gun, Kid."

"No," said Llamkin, springing out for the man Shayne had hit. "We must not kill. It isn't necessary."

CHAPTER XV

Business as Usual

INSTANTLY his sinewy form was engulfed in a tide of snarling men and legs and arms. How he kept his feet seemed a miracle to the frantic reporter.

Shayne found himself being rapidly beaten down by two of the vicious gang. He fought valiantly, but physical exertion had been a private don't of his for too long a time. Crown slapped him across the head with a gun barrel, while the two henchmen held him. That was the final subjugation of

Shayne. Knocked to his knees, the reporter stared up from between his two burly captors through a haze of pain.

Llamkin had taken his fight toward a pyramid of packing cases, leaving a trail of unconscious men in his wake. From the rear, Caroll spitting blood and the tall, hooded man limping painfully, came the remaining pair from the office. Of Diller and Marlowe there was no sign.

Caroll had another gun in his fist.

"Lemme me blast him, Mr. Crown," he pleaded with a snarl. "Break two of my teeth, will he?"

"No!" roared Crown. "You blockhead! You would kill before we have what we want. We need this man to control the other. Get over there and help subdue that madman. You two, tie this fellow up good."

The burly pair willingly obeyed by hurling the reporter to his face on the hard, grimy floor. One knelt on him while the second lashed his hands firmly behind him. Then they tied his ankles, dragged him to one side. Leaving him against a burlap bale of something, they ran to take part in the other fray.

"*Himmel!*" said Crown in awe. "That inventor fights like a tiger."

"I told you," said the man still hooded. "He wrecked the Canary Club single-handed. You had better let those men wing him a couple of times."

"*Nein!* Are you mad, too? Use clubs, men! Beat him into submission!"

"Won't this noise be heard?" asked the hooded man anxiously.

"Not by anyone who matters," Crown answered. "Only my own men are on duty tonight as watchmen."

Shayne heard no more, for the pair moved away to follow the progress of the running fight. And running fight it was. Llamkin's adversaries were cut down to six men, in spite of the addition of Caroll and the pair who had captured Shayne. Llamkin had shaken free from the mob and was leading them all over the huge packed warehouse.

It looked as though they had him cornered once. He had leaped into the air and caught hold of the dangling chains of an overhead crane. He went up the chains, hand over hand, like a sailor. Reaching the top, he flipped himself up on the girder and ran like a monkey along the skeletal braces high overhead.

Caroll lost his head at this. He began firing at the fleeing figure that was disappearing in the blackness above the widely spaced electric bulbs. The bellowing .45 awoke the echoes in the building.

"Fool!" howled Crown, rushing forward and knocking aside the chauffeur's hand. "If that man dies, so do you!"

"Hell, he'll get away!" snarled Caroll.

"He cannot get out. The warehouse is locked and barred at every exit. Climb up there after him. Get him down!"

"He's got my other gun," protested Caroll. "Or did you find it on the other bird?"

"They must have dropped it," said Crown. "He hasn't used it."

"He doesn't appear to need a gun," commented the tall hood nervously. "I told you what he did to the Canary—".

"So you did!" snapped Crown. "You go now and guard the trap to the boat. As soon as we catch him, you must get away. I will call you if I need you later."

"All right," agreed the tall man.

He turned and limped hurriedly back toward the office where lay the two unconscious crooks.

THE entire group drifted toward the back end of the warehouse, leaving Shayne alone and helpless in his bonds. Straining his eyes, he saw two of the gang laboriously climbing to the girders above and grimly preparing to stalk the elusive Llamkin.

Twisting around to see what offered in his immediate neighborhood, the reporter noted that the bale he rested against was one of a pyramid. It rose to within perhaps three feet of the spiderlike girders above.

A wild cry from the depths of the warehouse made him start. Each moment he was afraid they had captured Llamkin. Then came another scream, which ended in a gurgle. Llamkin had

caught another rat with his fists.

"Hell, Mr. Crown!" bellowed Caroll's voice from the gloom. "You better give me a rifle and let me pot this guy. Only three of your shock troopers are left. He's scattered all the rest from hell to breakfast."

George Crown uttered a roar of rage and plunged toward the sound of Caroll's voice. The next moment Shayne caught sight of a flitting shadow darting out of the gloom of the opposite front corner. It was Llamkin.

Without a pause, the Kid from Mars ran straight to the side of the tightly bound sports reporter. He scooped him up as though he were an infant.

"Are you hurt, Louis?" he whispered.

"Not beyond repair," grunted Shayne. "But we're slated to die—both of us. Get out of here while you're still in one piece. Leave me here and run. I'll manage somehow."

There was a howl of triumph from the corner Llamkin had just quitted. A pair of the human tigers came loping out of the darkness. Llamkin didn't take time to argue. He started climbing those bales of goods as though they were stairs. The reporter was still held tightly under one arm.

He paused at the top only long enough to throw Shayne across one shoulder. Then he was on the girders again and running with sure, swift feet.

Shayne took one look at the concrete floor far below. He snapped his eyes shut and swallowed hard.

"Sorry to carry you this way," apologized Llamkin. "But there is no time. I have found a possible way out through what must be a ventilator in the roof. Why are these men so intent on capturing us?"

"They are—foreign spies," Shayne heaved in jolting spasms. "They want your stratosphere ship—for their own country—"

"How odd. I intend giving the plans of that and a hundred other things to your entire world. Why should they be so impatient?"

"War," groaned the reporter. "As if you didn't know— They don't intend for the rest—of the world to have it—Just like Colonel Thomlinson and John Hartman—intend to see that the—United States get it—"

"But it isn't an instrument of war," Llamkin declared. "It is a gravity space ship, designed only for spatial voyages."

"Llamkin, you pick a hell—of a time to kid— If you know of a way out of this place—find it quick— That gang will burn—your feet off to make you—surrender that ship—if they get their hands on you—"

"You mean they are enemies of your government?" demanded Llamkin, halting abruptly at a cross-beam.

"What the hell did you think they were doing—playing ping-pong?"

SHAYNE could feel the kid from Mars tremble slightly beneath him. He held his breath while he feared they would both plunge to their death below.

"Wait here," said Llamkin briefly, folding Shayne across the bracing girder. "You'll be safe until I come back."

"Good Lord, don't leave me like this!" yelped the reporter in dismay. "At least untie my hands. There's a penknife in my pocket."

Llamkin did not trouble to hunt the knife. He merely inserted his sinewy fingers beneath a strand and snapped it like thread. Unwinding the rope, he clapped an encouraging hand on the reporter's shoulder. Then he went off along the beam with the sure-footedness of a structural steel worker. Shayne could only cling there and tremble.

But from his aerial vantage point, the reporter saw a strange thing happen abruptly. Llamkin met the two pursuers close to the pile of bales. They saw him coming, and both of them leaped to grab him. Llamkin brushed off the gripping hands of the first, who plummeted, screaming in terror, down to his death on the floor.

The second connected. Locked in mortal combat, the two of them toppled forward and fell from the girder.

Shayne caught his breath in a sobbing gasp. The pair of them hit the fourth of fifth step of the pile of bales and rolled safely to the bottom. But only Llamkin arose from the floor. The spy was out cold.

There was a bellow of rage, and

Crown came racing out of the shadows, a Garand rifle in his hands. Caroll ran at his heels.

It looked like curtains for the Kid from Mars. Shayne groaned weakly. He gauged his chances of dropping from his perch and landing on the overwhelmingly armed man.

It wasn't necessary to attempt such a foolhardy stunt. For the first time, Llamkin reached swiftly toward his belt. His hand came up with a small black object just as Crown raised his frightful rifle.

"Surrender," ordered the spy leader in an awful voice. "I will kill—"

He never got further. A fine jet of whitish mist lanced out from the weapon in Llamkin's hand. It billowed over both Crown and Caroll before they could move.

The result was instantaneous, like magic. Both men went as rigid as statues where they stood. Then they toppled full-length, as a log falls, and lay perfectly motionless. It was like knocking over pewter soldiers, for they remained in the same stiff attitude they had been standing in. It was ghastly.

A shout of alarm roared from the direction of the office. Llamkin sprang over his vanquished foes and headed for the sound. There was reason for alarm.

A rising wail of sirens came from the direction of the street. Shayne heard the squealing of brakes and the pound of running feet along the outside of the great building. Axes began thudding against the front doors. The front doors began splintering.

The police had arrived. Obviously somebody had heard Caroll's earlier shooting and had called the law.

LLAMKIN'S stride did not falter. He charged into the office in time to see the bulky Marlowe disappearing through a trap-door in the floor. He aimed his queer gun.

A darting streak of white—and a statue of living stone plunged down. It crashed upon the deck of a speedboat just below.

There was a startled curse, a yell of terror in Diller's voice, the sudden roar of an awakened motor. Then Llamkin was hurtling down the steep steps, to the hidden landing beneath the office, at the inner end of the U-shaped pier.

Once more his gas gun hissed softly. The last two members of the espionage crew toppled lifelessly before him. Llamkin calmly stepped aboard the craft and cut the switch.

Ignoring the bodies of the two American crooks, he gathered up the stiff figure of the tall, hooded man. He sprang back up the steps in time to come face to face with Sergeant Reilly.

"Jumping pixies!" yelled the sergeant. "You again?"

CHAPTER XVI

The Cockeyed Truth

LLAMKIN nodded gravely and set his burden on its feet. Steadying it with one hand, he pulled off the cape and obscuring hood with the other. The granitelike features of Dr. Percival Folkstone were exposed under the cone of light. The eyes glittered sightlessly.

"Mother of God!" murmured Reilly, crossing himself. But he lowered his gun. "What kind of a spell did you be usin' to kill him? I found two more stiffs like that out in the warehouse among the litter of the dead and the dyin'."

"I am sorry, Sergeant, if anybody died. There are two more like this down in the speedboat. Chick Diller and a man called Marlowe. Louis Shayne identified them by those names."

"Hell, Sergeant," exclaimed one of the bluecoats behind Reilly. "This stiff is that high society eye doctor—Folkstone!"

"How did you kill him?" demanded the sergeant again.

"He isn't dead," said Llamkin. "I merely anesthetized him with this."

"What is it—a gas gun?" Reilly surveyed the small black weapon with goggling eyes.

"Yes."

"Well, would you mind handin' it over, laddie boy? I'm afraid you're un-

der arrest again—if you don't mind."

"I do mind," said Llamkin to both question and statement. He returned the queer little gun to his belt.

The sergeant scratched his chin in perplexity. Then he waved a couple of his men toward the trap-door.

"Go down and bring up them other spalpeens. Who did you say, Lambkin? Diller and Marlowe? Boy, do we want them two birds bad! What the hell happened here? Do you tear up every joint you go into?"

"Help!" piped a voice from overhead, in the gloom of the warehouse.

Sergeant Reilly started, his gun leaping up.

"Louis Shayne," explained Llamkin quickly. "I fear I forgot him for a moment. I had to leave him up there."

"Had to leave him *up* there?" repeated Reilly dazedly.

"Yes. His feet are tied. I'll bring him down."

Before the bewildered sergeant could say him nay, Llamkin thrust the stiff figure of Dr. Folkstone at him. The Kid from Mars sprinted out into the warehouse, where numerous officers were rounding up the victims of this amazing one-man war

In a matter of moments, Louis Shayne was safely on the floor and giving a recount to the police.

"It's the darndest thing," the reporter concluded. "George Crown is the head of a spy ring that included all of these men. Diller and Marlowe we throw in gratis. They're the pair who kidnaped Lambkin and me. If you need any more proof than what we've told you, and what you can see here, you should be able to sweat it out of some of these hoodluma."

"You can't sweat nothin' out of dead men," said the sergeant.

"But there is only one dead man," replied Llamkin gravely. "He fell to his death when he missed his hold on me up on the girder."

"And how about Crown and Folkstone and the three others?" asked Reilly.

"They are not dead," reiterated Llamkin. "They are in a state of unconscious paralysis, which will wear off in a couple of hours."

"What kind of new gas is that?"

"It isn't new on Mars. It has no Earthly name. I merely brought it with me solely as a possible protective measure."

"Eh? Oh, Mars," responded the sergeant vaguely, squinting at Llamkin. "Well, I guess we'd better be going down to headquarters. Come along."

SHAYNE had been examining the curiously stiff figures. He straightened up and shook his head in wonder.

"We'll go with you Sarge," he said. "But I'm advising you to get in touch with Colonel Thomlinson before you do any talking. And it's true—these men are not dead. Caroll's already going limp. He'll be right out of it."

It was only two o'clock when Shayne and Llamkin returned to their hotel. It seemed like a century to the sports reporter. He stopped by the bar for a couple of stiff drinks and a quart bottle to take up to their suite. One highball after they got to their quarters was all he could get Llamkin to swallow. Then, while Shayne set himself to the serious business of drinking himself out of the reaction shakes, Llamkin drew Caroll's automatic from his pocket. He began examining the weapon with great absorption.

"A rather primitive sort of firearm," he finally commented.

"The hell you say!" snorted Shayne, refilling his glass with straight whisky. "You wouldn't be sitting here coolly criticizing it if you'd stopped that slug Caroll fired out of it."

"Equally true of the primeval arrow," replied Llamkin with equanimity. "Nevertheless it is far from having the efficacy of the atomic-blast ray gun we use on Mars for hunting the Krulogru monster."

"Nuts!" said Shayne weakly. "That gas gun of yours is tall enough. But how the hell did you get out of that hammerlock grip Marlowe had on you? Ju-jutsu?"

"Ju-jutsu? Oh—the Japanese science, isn't it? Yes, you might call it the Martian equivalent of that. I simply applied one of the fundamental principles of Zartocxl. That is the sys-

tem of complete mental control of bone and muscle, with the addition of the simple physica of momentum and inertia. Your East Indians and Tibetan llamas come closer to its understanding than your Japs. I'm glad I didn't seriously injure Diller and Marlowe."

"I'm aorry you didn't kill tbem both. They scared the hell out of me. Say, what made you leave me stuck up there on that girder and go back to get into a fight? And why didn't you think of using your gas gun before? Were you planning to hold that up your sleeve as a special bargain to offer with your airship?"

"Not at all. The men were endangering you and inconveniencing me. That left me no recourse save to capture them and turn them over to the police for you."

Shayne solemnly poured himself another drink. He downed it in two gulps before speaking His tongue was getting just a bit thick, but a warm glow was spreading to take the psycbic chill from his body.

"Well, you broke up one of the slickest spy rings I gueas there was in America, pal. And you saved my life in the bargain. There won't be anything too good for you now. Kill your publicity? What a laugh! Everything that happens just puffs you up all the more."

Llamkin eonsidered him thoughtfully.

"But I'm not seeking publicity."

"You don't have to. It seeks you. But tell me, with all the stuff you've got on the ball, why did you aubmit so tamely to being kidnaped in the first place?"

"I thought Diller and Marlowe were friends of yours."

"What? How did you get such a erazy idea?"

"When we got into that cab, one of them said something about me. It led me to believe that he knew me. 'Quiet as a lamb,' he said. And then you addressed the other by name. So I thougbt, naturally—"

LOUIS SHAYNE interrupted with a shout of none too sober laughter.

"That was just a coincidence, Kid—another one of those plays on words. Never mind, don't ask me to explain. You wouldn't understand. Sure, I recognized Diller by Marlowe's name. I knew those two snakes traveled together. Just some of that simple deduction and correlation of ideas I've been trying to explain to you. Good Lord, what a ghastly joke! You thought I was rigging you for a laugh. Kid, I gave you up as hopeless when we walked out of that Harlem club. So that's why I had a hell of a time convincing you that that Pittsburgh Klansman stuff was the real thing!"

"Pittsburgh Klansman?" repeated Llamkin uncertainly.

"Yeah, those two black hoods with the Indian sign on tbem."

"I can't understand the devious reasoning of Earthmen," said Llamkin, frowning, "It wasn't necessary to abduct me to learn about my space ship. I shall give its secrets to the entire world of men when Colonel Thomlinson gathers all your savants together for me to address How soon now do you think it will be?"

Shayne raised somewhat bleary eyes and goggled at his companion's serious face.

"My God!" he mumbled in drunken solemnity. "Do you still believe in tbat malarky?"

Llamkin was pacing the rug in long, restless strides. He stopped short and looked sharply at the reporter.

"Certainly," he answered. "Why shouldn't I? What do you mean?"

Shayne began to laugh shamefacedly. He refilled his glass from the rapidly emptying bottle, spilling the liquor carelessly as he did so. Then he hiccoughed with restraint.

"Lambkin, I've had a sneaking suspicion all along tbat you were pulling my leg. But I'll be damned if I don't believe you really can't see a joke even when it slaps you rigbt smack in the old puss."

"Joke? You mean that Hartman and Thomlinson are—are jesting with me? Indulging in what you Earthmen call a joke?"

"What else could I mean?"

"They don't intend to call a meeting for me?"

"Oh, sure, but not with scientists to

listen to a lecture on Mars. Thomlinson's probably had a couple of private talks with the President by now. I guess he's arranging a meeting for you with the military experts at Washington. After what you did tonight, it'll be a cinch."

"Military? But I don't want to meet with any war experts of any government of Earth. I came here to appeal to a world-wide congress of scientists."

The sports reporter quit laughing. He even stopped smiling. For a fleeting moment there was an expression of pity in his eyes. When he spoke, in spite of his impeded tongue, his voice was hard and flat.

"Kid, you're priceless. It's a shame to tell you the Easter rabbit doesn't lay colored eggs. But, bell, somebody's got to wise you up! It might as well be me. Hartman never did have any intention of calling a meeting of scientists for a crackpot like you. He's paying me to make you stop clowning and get ready to sell your stratosphere ship."

LLAMKIN'S face was a study of intolerable pain.

"No!" he said sharply. "Don't tell me that! Surely, none of you would trifle with a matter of such grave importance as an interplanetary mission, a mission to which my whole life has been dedicated, a mission which is for the solemn purpose of saving an entire dying world. I won't—I can't believe it."

"None of us?" jeered Shayne in drunken frankness. "All of us! Why don't you drop this nutty Mars business and get down to brass tacks. You don't have to call a meeting of scientists to make the bidding brisk on your invention. Where would Hartman and Thomlinson get a group of scientists from, anyway? You think scientists would travel all the way to New York from England, Russia, Germany—anywhere—just to hear your crazy story? Forget it, Kid. Get wise to yourself."

Llamkin, his fine, bronzed face curiously white and drawn, came over to the table and sat down across from the reporter. There were actual tears in his eyes, but Shayne was too far gone to notice.

"Listen, Louis," said Llamkin in a low, emotion-choked voice. "Do you realize what you are saying, or are you too drunk?"

"Sure, I know what I'm saying," hiccoughed the reporter. "And I'm gettin' good and tired of the whole game."

"Is—is Elaine Elliot a—a party to this—this jest?"

"Elaine?" Shayne frowned as he strove to concentrate. "Oh, sure. She had her orders from that blimp, Rynder to unbend her pretty neck and be nice to you—sorta entertain you."

CHAPTER XVII

Welcome to Mars!

SLOWLY LLAMKIN lowered his head upon his folded arms. There was silence in the room for a long moment. Shayne stared with bleary and unfocused eyes.

"Don't take it so hard, Kid. 'S'all a good joke. Buck up an' laugh. Af' all, you got th' laugh on Hartman and th' colonel—and the spies. Nawsir, they didn't get th' ship. Don't give up th' ship, Kid!"

Llamkin raised his head.

"The ways of Earthmen are beyond my comprehension," he declared sadly. "All I wanted was an open-minded audience of intelligent people. Mars, my native planet, needs but one thing, which you possess in such abundance on Earth that you waste it. A sense of humor is the catalyst we need to start the reclamation of our dying world. Our greatest scientists have reasoned this after exhaustive research, and they can't be wrong.

"I was going to explain all this and simply ask a few outstanding humorists of Earth to go back with me to Mars, carrying this priceless gift. If they could not explain it—as you have tried to explain to me—our scientists could, by examination, find it in them and analyze it. But now—"

"Huh?" hiccoughed Shayne, cocking his head and squinting at Llamkin. "Whazzat?"

"I just wanted a few Earthmen to accompany me to Mars and submit to mental tests and examinations," repeated Llamkin. "It wouldn't take more than a couple of your lunar months. I would have pledged myself to return them to Earth safely. They would have high honors bestowed upon them by the Council of Xzorculu, the highest governing body on Mars."

"Oh," mumbled Shayne wisely, nodding. "Jusb a nice li'l trip to Marsh? Why dincha shay that a long time ago? I tell you what to do. No use askin' you suggest? Do you know of anybody?"

"Take the biggest jokers in world," said Shayne sleepily. "Hartman, Thomlinshon, Maurice Rynder, tb' President of United Statsh, Elaine Elliot—anybody."

"Johnny Olsen, the comedian?"

"Huh? Naw! Comediansh not funny in private life. Ask their wives."

"Not funny in private life," repeated Llamkin musingly. His gaze was speculative as he stared at the drooping head of the reporter. "Didn't I hear

'em. They wouldn't go. Tha's it. Kidnap 'em. The Kid kidnaper!"

"Take people without their consent? I can't do that, Louis."

"Oh, you can't, eh? Well, then you won't take nobody—no-o-body at all, shee? They won't go, tha's all."

"But it isn't ethical," protested Llamkin.

"Wha's wrong with it? Everybody hasb nice time, honorsb—come home in coupla months—ev'thing fine."

"Whom should I take, if I do what you say once you were not married, Louis?"

"Whosh married? Me? Ish a damn lie!"

One heroic hiccough, and Shayne knocked the empty whisky bottle to the floor, and began to snore.

Llamkin stared at him for a long moment. Then he sprang to his feet, his blue eyes beginning to glow.

"He's right! *In vino, veritas,* as he said once."

With feverish hands Llamkin strip-

ped himself of his ruined evening clothes. He dug out his original garb of flamboyant hues. In a few moments he stood as he had first been seen upon the playing field of Meadowbrook. Stepping swiftly to the door that opened on the roof, he went out into the soft darkness. Intently he began twisting dials and pressing buttons on the massive belt about his waist.

Like a plummet, soundless and wingless, a torpedo shape dropped out of the sky far overhead. Nearing the roof of the tall hotel, it checked its descent as lightly as a smoothly braking pneumatic elevator. Then it settled gently to within a single foot of the terrace upon which Llamkin stood. A faint drone of smoothly running machinery, and the bow port opened to permit the projection of the tubular steps.

The Kid from Mars drew and exhaled a long breath, and then climbed purposefully into his ship.

* * * * *

GENERALLY Louis Shayne awoke heavy of head, thick of tongue, and surly of disposition. To his amazement he did not awaken in such a sad plight. One moment he had been sleeping soundly, the next he was drowsily awake.

It seemed to be morning. He was conscious of a feeling of comfort and well being. The Sun was shining in a friendly fashion upon the full length of his bed, bathing him from head to foot in gentle and pleasant warmth. He yawned and stretched prodigiously, never troubling to open his eyes. He turned luxuriously over on his side for a secondary snooze.

Never had his bed felt so comfortable, so cozily fitted to his form. Llamkin must have put him to bed last night after he passed out. Good old Llamkin! A crackpot, but one swell guy. He was going to have to—

Suddenly Shayne jerked wide awake. A queer thought struck him. Not in ten years had he slept in a bed where the Sun—morning or afternoon—could shine on him.

He flopped back over on his shoulders and opened his eyes. For a moment he blinked in the soft golden glow that bathed him. Bewilderedly he sought to orient himself. This was not his bed, and that wasn't the Sun!

He was lying on a long and narrow couch of some soft, resilient material that was pastel blue to the sight and velvet to the touch. About six or eight feet above his head, like a horizontal bar that paralleled the couch, was a glowing bar of golden light. Literally that—a bar of warm yellow light that did not glare. It seemed quite similar to the new tube lamps which were gaining so rapidly in popularity.

As soon as he had assimilated this odd fact, he became aware of the ceiling. No color-mad interior decorator had ever blended such colors and designs on ceilings outside of a madhouse. Yet the ceiling, taken as a whole, was soothing and pleasing in effect. When his wandering, wondering eye sought to trace a particular column of delicate color down to its source, he saw that he could not tell where the ceiling left off and the wall began. There was no break, no line of demarcation. Walls and ceiling blended into each other as completely as the soft colors did. It was like resting under an opalescent bell jar.

Abruptly he saw the door beyond his feet. It was an opening fully eight feet high. The upper part curved inward with the gently curving ceiling and at the same time curved upward to a point on the order of a mosque top. He recognized the queer blending of architectural styles as bordering on the Gothic and the Moorish.

At this point the reporter became aware that his couch and bar of soft light were not the only ones in this strange chamber. There were two others to one side of him and three more on the other. In a neat row against the wall opposite the door stood the six of them. And they were all occupied!

Now Shayne knew he was dreaming. He sat up abruptly. He made further discoveries. He was fully dressed in his rumpled but well tailored tuxedo. There was no coverlet of any kind on his couch. The corners of the room were rounded like the joinder of walls

and ceiling. There was no other furniture of any kind in the chamber. He saw no opening of any kind save that one closed door.

AN audible yawn and a slight movement from the end couch caught his ear and eye. He got up and peered across the slumbering form next to him. He got a double shock, for he recognized both persons.

Colonel Henry Thomlinson snored gently beside him, also clad in evening dress. John Hartman, in dinner jacket of sober black, was the yawning, stretching gentleman on the end. In growing panic and bewilderment the reporter looked quickly in the opposite direction.

On the couch next to his reposed the plump form of Maurice Rynder, clad in maroon silk pajamas and lemon-yellow dressing gown. Beyond the vice-president of Three Dimensional Pictures was a woman. It was Elaine Elliot, looking like the Sleeping Beauty. She lay quietly there with her raven tresses framing her neck and shoulders in a halo of midnight glory.

The figure on the last couch, under an individual bar of golden light, was that of a man in a cutaway coat and pinstripe trousers. But he was lying with his face toward the far wall, so Shayne could not recognize him.

"Now I know I'm batty," Shayne assured himself aloud. "I never got a dream like this even out of Volstead gin and corn whisky."

At his words, John Hartman sat upright with a snap. The publisher glared around wildly. He caught sight of the sports reporter, looked beyond him, and then brought his straining eyes back to his employee.

"Shayne!" he cried in alarm. "What the hell is all this?"

"You're my dream, and you're asking me!" snorted the reporter. "Or am I awake, and you and Thomlinson have pulled another fast one—this time in technicolor?"

Maurice Rynder popped awake, puffing and blowing and staring about him in big-eyed wonder.

"Heaven?" he gasped. "I'm in heaven?"

"In an outfit like that?" derided Shayne. "Saint Peter must be colorblind."

Colonel Thomlinson started up, his lean, keen face registering baffled amazement.

"In the name of God," he breathed, "what has happened?"

"It looks like Rainbow Pellets has turned the tables on us," Hartman declared. "Ask him. He says I'm a dream, and I believe it."

A tiny scream prevented further comment. They all turned quickly.

Elaine Elliot was clutching at her hair and staring wildly around.

In a group, perhaps seeking mutual solace in proximity, the four men ran toward the girl's couch. Shayne sought in vain for the proper words of comfort to offer her.

The sound which had escaped her lips had aroused the sixth and final sleeper. The man turned over, opened his eyes, blinked. He stared in stark disbelief at the beautiful young woman next to him. Immediately he sat bolt upright. Colonel Thomlinson gave vent to a choking cry.

"Great Jupiter!" he gurgled. "The—the President of the United States!"

IT was none other. The great man lifted his head in that familiar gesture of his, his solemn gaze seeking out the financier. He blinked once more, smiled dubiously, and looked again at the charming Elaine.

"Hello, Thomlinson," he said in his mellow baritone voice. "I thought you were in New York. I've been in numerous delicate and diplomatic situations in my life, but this is indeed a rendezvous with destiny. Can you explain it to me?"

"Mr. President—Mr. President," faltered the colonel, "I—I haven't the slightest idea what this is all about."

"No? Ah, that is John Hartman, too, is it not? At least I am in good company. You might introduce me."

The colonel got sufficient control of himself to do so. Maurice Rynder beamed happily at his introduction, then glanced down at his strictly informal attire, and became self-conscious. Shayne took it in his stride.

The reporter stood there knitting his brows and scratching his head. He pursued an elusive fragment of thought which seemed to have some bearing on this crazy situation. But he couldn't seem able to pin it down.

Elaine was a good trouper. "I am honored to make your acquaintance, Mr. President," she said, smiling. "I only hope I'm not dreaming."

"I hope I am," said Shayne fervently. "This—this beats me."

"You mean you had nothing to do with this?" demanded Thomlinson.

"I certainly do," Shayne came back crisply, pointedly. "But I'm not so sure of you and John Hartman."

At that instant there was a slight sound across the room. They all looked toward it, startled. The door was open.

Llamkin stood there. He was bare-headed. For the first time since Shayne had know him, the Kid from Mars was without his special radio belt. His garb was different, too. Becoming, but futuristic in cut, his slacks were pale green. His Russian-collar blouse was mauve and gold.

"Good morning, friends," he greeted in a warm voice. "You awakened a full hour before we expected you to. Welcome to Mars!"

"Mars?" repeated the President. Then he laughed pleasantly. "I recognize you now, my friend. You are the—ah—gentleman from Mars who broke up the championship polo match at Meadowbrook last week, and, more recently, other things."

"Last month, sir," corrected Llamkin courteously. "You have been in a state of suspended animation for three weeks."

CHAPTER XVIII

Where Are They?

ALL of them looked blank at this astounding remark save Elaine. She turned to glower at the gaping Maurice Ryndor.

"Maurice," she said in an angry but appalled undertone, "you are going to land us all in Alcatraz with your mad publicity. Do you know what the penalty is for kidnaping the President of the United States?"

"Don't talk crazy," retorted the fat man with more spirit than he had ever shown. "Would I go around kidnaping people when I'm wearing clothes like this?"

Elaine became aware of her own charming dishabille. Her night-dress was as becoming as a princess gown. She lapsed into rosy confusion.

Shayne glanced automatically at his wrist-watch. It had completely run down. Hartman shook with visible anger.

"What sort of nonsense is this?" he roared. "Where are we? Who did this to us? How was it done?"

"Nonsense?" repeated Llamkin in the sternest voice he had yet used. "You, sir, are the perpetrator of nonsense—you and Colonel Thomlinson. But forgive me, I do not mean to lose my temper. I have come to escort you to breakfast. Miss Elliot"—and now his tone was coolly impersonal—"there is a boudoir at your disposal, just across the corridor. Gentlemen, there is a Martian substitute for a washroom adjoining this chamber. Come, I will show you."

Colonel Thomlinson surprised them all by bursting into a hearty laugh.

"All right, Lambkin, you win. I apologize to you. Now drop all this movie stuff and explain the joke to the President."

"This is not a joke, Colonel Thomlinson," returned Llamkin succinctly. "I'll explain gladly. But I thought you would prefer postponing it until you have broken your fast."

At his words, they realized suddenly that they were hungrier than they remembered ever having been so early in the morning.

"I demand an immediate explanation," said Hartman angrily. "Who is responsible for this high-handed outrage? How did you accomplish it? Where are we?"

"Very well," Llamkin answered crisply. "I acted upon good advice. You gentlemen refused to call a meeting of scientists to hear my story and

respond to my plea for such a little aid. All that Mars required was a visit from a few men of Earth to permit our own savants to isolate that mental condition known to you as humor.

"After you deluded me and laughed at me, I simply entered your various bedchambers and abducted you. First, each of you was placed in a state of suspended animation. Then I put you in separate cubicles in my ship, and brought you to Mars. We arrived here some twenty-four hours ago. You have been reviving under the vitamin tubes ever since. That is all."

"And how," asked the President in measured tones, "were you able to penetrate to my bedroom in the White House without detection?"

"Quite readily, sir. The rocket tubes of my ship were designed for several purposes. One purpose is to spray a cloud of anesthetizing gas over a wide area. I simply put everybody on the grounds to sleep, lowered my ship close to the roof of your residence, and entered your home unmolested. Louis, Elaine, and Rynder, I removed via the roof of the Telecast Plaza. Mr. Hartman and Colonel Thomlinson I procured by the use of a hand gas gun. You were all asleep at the moment of my entry and consequently knew nothing of it until this moment."

"Impossible!" cried the President.

"Incredible! Ridiculous!" snorted Hartman and Thomlinson together.

"I don't believe it!" yelled Rynder.

ELAINE said nothing. Her eyes were twin pools of starry wonder as she gazed at the speaker.

"You are here," pointed out Llamkin calmly.

This was unanswerable, wherever "here" was

"This is the best dream I ever had," Shayne finally broke his silence. "It practically makes sense. Kid, you're so true to form, I almost think I'm awake."

"You doubt me," said Llamkin. "You refuse to credit the evidence of your senses. And you, Louis— To think that you, of all Earthmen, refuse to believe! Look!"

He pressed a stud in a row of buttons beside the door and pointed toward the end wall. They followed his order.

On the wall, they saw a soft glow come into being and expand outward like the light from an opening shutter on an optical machine. As they watched, it grew to a six-foot square and took on color and depth as though the wall were dissolving.

Suddenly the wall wasn't there. It was as though they stood before a magic window. They looked out upon an incredible landscape.

"A Three-dimensional color projector!" exclaimed Rynder excitedly. "Where and how did you get it, Lambkin? They haven't even been released to the theaters yet."

"Again you delude yourself," said Llamkin. "You are actually looking through the wall at the scene of the Burning Desert outside this laboratory. The instrument I am employing is what your television may some day become. I suppose you would call it penetrision. Look! Where on Earth is there a scene such as that?"

They looked. To left and right, stretching away toward illimitable distance, were bleak and sheer and dreary barren rock. The wrinkled crags seemed to cry aloud that they had suffered the erosion and winds of untold centuries.

Across the foreground there trotted an incredible green figure, a figment from a nightmare, a huge, eight-foot monstrosity of green skin and egg-shaped head that shambled its splay-footed course from right to left and disappeared from view beyond the edge of the screen. After this bizarre creature passed, there was no movement of life about the weird scene.

In the center lay nothing but the arid sand of a red desert. The sand seemed to glow and ache with a sullen, fiery life of its own.

Far away, in the middle distance, there twinkled and glittered the spires and minarets and towers of what appeared to be a fairy city. Through a dark and cloudless sky, as though it were a medium of smoked glass, there shone a tiny Sun. The yellow ball was about half the size of the normal Sun that warmed Earth.

It was queer, bizarre, desolate. Yet that heart-rending scene somehow made their throats ache. It made them queerly homesick for the green and familiar things of Earth.

Elaine uttered a little sobbing, choking cry.

"How weirdly beautiful! How—how terribly sad!"

"Good God!" exclaimed Hartman, passing a trembling hand across his brow. "What was that—thing?"

"You mean the green man?" asked Llamkin. "That was a Kanobian—a member of one of the interior races. They are employed at this experimental station as servants. Very likely you would consider them highly intelligent, but they compare to the ruling race of Mars as the Australian bushmen compare to your Earth Anglo-Saxons."

"Well!" snorted Shayne. "That's the first green frogman I ever saw that didn't come out of a bottle."

"Ah!" said Llamkin, smiling "You are thinking of your Arabian folklore of genii?"

"No," said Shayne. "I meant spirits of another density. Go on with your lecture."

"You are looking south toward the rim of the Burning Desert," stated the solemn voice of Llamkin. "The city you see in the distance is Xzorcus, capital city of Mars. The Sun at this time of the year is nearly one hundred and fifty million miles distant. You are viewing this scene from the scientific laboratory of Dneirf, my mentor, who is known on Mars as Z-fourteen-Y-six-three-twelve.

"Everything within this building has been adjusted to Earth conditions. It is where I spent my entire formative life. Outside, exposed to the normal conditions of Mars, even I would die in a short while. I am an exile upon my own world. When I tried, Mr. Hartman, to explain this to your Professor Strauss, he wouldn't even listen to me. Now do you believe what I told you?"

"A better movie set I never saw in my life," said Rynder in an awed voice. "I would give a million dollars to such an artist to paint back-drops and design sets for me."

Hartman recovered from his spell at this remark.

He whirled on the fat little vice-president and grabbed his shoulder in a cruel clutch.

"Confound you, Rynder!" he grated. "So you are in on this crazy thing, too! I might have recognized your touch."

Llamkin made no sound as he pressed another button.

The scene faded back into the pastel-tinted wall. The President turned gravely.

"You ask us to believe, my friend," he said, "that yesterday we were on Earth, and today we are fifty or sixty million miles away?"

"Three weeks ago you were on Earth," said Llamkin. "Even a gravity ship cannot make a spatial voyage of fifty million miles in ten hours."

"I fear I must concur in the general consensus," the President answered. "This is ridiculous."

"At least, you will come to breakfast? Dneirf has gone to considerable pains to produce a typical Earthly meal. But I have included a couple of Xzorculuan fruits that I think you will like Please feel at ease and perfectly free to ask about any and everything strange you see. I will wait for you."

IN sober silence, the six puzzled Earthlings filed out of the room They entered the lavatories Llamkin pointed out to them. In the washroom, the men compared notes and made a slightly disquieting discovery. Save for Shayne's watch, not one of them had so much as a penknife.

"That man is a madman," declared Hartman forcefully. "And we haven't the slightest thing we can use as a weapon."

"The Kid may be a screwball," Shayne corrected. "But we don't need any weapons to fight him. I feel safer in his company than yours. He saved my life from those spies."

The publisher reddened. "Now, Shayne, that spy business last night—"

"Three weeks ago," corrected the reporter. "I insist on my dreams being logical."

"I've already apologized," put in

Thomlinson soothingly. "I thought you were stalling us along, Shayne. I didn't know what you were up against. Don't let us quarrel now."

"No, gentlemen," added the President. "The condition is grave. It is obvious that we are being held somewhere for ransom. If we cannot work ourselves out of this predicament, we must remain calm until the F.B.I. locates us."

"Ransom?" exclaimed Rynder in comical dismay. "Six people like us? Holy cameras, it will take the national income to do it!"

"WE might watch our chance and gang up on Lambkin—catch him off-guard," suggested the colonel hesitantly.

"Before we even know the layout of this joint?" queried Shayne acidly. "Besides, didn't you get your lesson about trying to gang the Kid from Mars? Have you forgotten the Canary Club? The Mammoth warehouse?"

They finished their ablutions, accepting the queerly designed wash basins, burnished steel mirrors, oddly different combs, brushes, and absorbent towels without comment.

When they returned to the corridor, they found Llamkin and Elaine awaiting them.

Llamkin broke off a description of Martian communal life and addressed the whole group.

"At the far end of this corridor is the observation room where we will breakfast. It is the main laboratory of the building. You will find the gravity and the atmospheric pressure somewhat lessened than here, but I do not think you will experience any particular discomfort. It is the chamber where I always meet with my tutors, a sort of common meeting-ground as it were. After breakfast, several of our scientists will wish to visit you there I trust you will offer no objections?"

"I don't think we're in a position to object to anything at this moment," said the President slowly, with a rueful smile.

"Thank you," responded Llamkin gravely. "I assure you that you will be submitted to no indignities."

CHAPTER XIX

Search for an Element

BREAKFAST proved to be a meal that Llamkin's involuntary guests never forgot.

In the first place, the setting itself awed them. It was a great, spherical chamber. Around the circular, endless wall, were banks and banks of odd looking machines and instruments. Even the metal and materials used in their construction were strange.

There were dials and gauges with unearthly symbols and marks. There were long tables and benches vaguely reminiscent of Roman design, but different in an inexplicable way.

Save for two doors opposite each other, there were no openings. The huge room was lighted high overhead by a circle of the same golden-barred tubing as had been above each of their couches

"Artificial sunlight," explained Llamkin simply. "I have spent my life under these rays. That is why my skin is bronzed like an Earthman's."

In the center of this chamber was the only jarring note, and the only familiar looking objects to the prisoners. This was a table and seven straight-back chairs. Save for the unidentifiable materials of construction, they might have come from the dining room of the Telecast Plaza. That was precisely where the design had come from

Upon the table were what appeared to be an electric percolator, toaster, and waffle-iron. There were napkins, china, glass, and silverware. A beautiful crystal bowl in the center contained fragrant fruits that reminded Shayne of an impressionist's conception of unknown tropical varieties. Best of all, there was food similar to good old ham and eggs and coffee.

Yet about every one of these familiar things there was an alien sort of feel which made even the tangible articles they touched, such as knives and forks, seem as unreal, and yet as reasonable, as objects in a dream. Perhaps it was the sense of lightness of weight due to

the lesser gravity, or the rarefied air that made them faintly dizzy. However, the food was material, and it was delicious. Except for the exotic fruit, it was aa normal a meal as tbey had ever eaten.

"I'm sorry I cannot offer you tobacco," said Llamkin with an apologetic air. They had concluded their breakfast without coming to blows over the little arguments that developed, pertaining to their predicament. "But the rarefied atmosphere of Mars and the appalling shrinkage of vegetation has made auch a minor vice obsolete. Now, if you please, I would like to introduce the wisest scientiats of my world. These savants, with your assistance, will become the saviors of Xzorculu."

Aa if thia were a signal, a door opened opposite the one through which they had entered. Five strange and incredible beinga came into the laboratory.

They were not at all horrifying—quite the contrary—and they were undoubtedly human. But they were giants. The shorteat and most delicately formed of the five was fully seven feet tall. All of them were thin. Not one could have been less than fifty years of age. And all of them were completely bald. They had an amazing breadth and depth of chest which indicated a great lung capacity.

Dressed in a fashion similar to that of Llamkin, they advanced Their faces, individual and sharply distinct, were normal-featured. But the stamp of a common solemnity marked them all.

"These, my frienda," said Llamkin, "are the five greatest minds of science upon Mars. They are Dneirf, Zarcol, Bllyna, Kartyl, and Xyttus. There is no need to introduce you. They have already examined each of you and know you by name. They have been busy preparing such things as these for you while you were sleeping."

As their names were called out, each Martian stepped forward and bowed gravely. The first, Dneirf, spoke.

"In the name of the world of Xzorculu I greet you, men of Earth. We feel particularly honored to receive as our guest the Preaident of one of your greatest nations."

His voice was deep and not unmusical. But it enunciated in an accent different from any the Earthlings had ever heard before. They didn't know whether to laugh or accept the situation seriously. The Preaident solved the matter hy answering for all.

"Accustomed aa I am to meeting with all kinds of people," he said in his splendid voice, "I aee no reason for drawing the line of democracy here. At least, you are treating ua royally if irregularly. We, perforce, respond to your greeting."

All five of the seven-foot giants listened in grave courtesy while he spoke. Then the third, Bllyna, turned eyes of onyx black upon Llamkin. He began speaking rapidly in a jargon that musically mixed gutturals, consonants, and a sort of siblant whistling together. Llamkin nodded soberly and replied in tbe same tongue. The five elderly giants began conferring in low tones among themselves. But their sharply alert eyes continued to study the group about the table.

At last the Kid from Mars turned to the Earthlings.

"Bllyna asked me if yours were not the voice whose intonationa I adopted in learnng to speak English," he explained to the President. "Before you return to Earth I will show you the radio-penetrision equipment by whicb we have been enabled to atudy Earth so closely. Now, if you are ready, they want to converae with you. They will ask you many questions, some of which may seem puzzling and strange.

"Please bear in mind that their purpose is to analyze the mental quirk Earthmen have which makes them laugh in the face of adversity, jest in the face of deatb, and stand shoulder to shoulder to give battle to their environment, to—to whistle while they work. Don't hesitate to answer in English as they all understand your language perfectly."

Maurice Rynder banged bis fist down on the table.

"I don't believe anything I'm hearing and seeing," he declared violently. "This is all fake. Five side-show giants

strutting around and spouting pig Latin, that's all they are!"

This outburst relieved the strain. Elaine laughed a bit hysterically. The others joined in, all but Shayne. The reporter was staring from Llamkin to the five pale and bald-headed giants, shaking his own head slowly in frowning perplexity.

At sight and sound of the laughter, the five Martians leaned forward in solemn intensity. Then they drew back as the laughter subsided and began clucking and piping and jabbering together like a group of excited Chinese laundrymen in a fan-tan house. In a moment they drew forward several of their queer benches and sat down.

Bllyna cingled out Elaine and began asking eager questions.

"Why did you laugh? Was what Rynder said humorous? If so, why?"

It wasn't any time until all five giants were asking questions on all manners of subjects and listening gravely to the varying answers. After a period of time it became apparent that they were following an involved system of their own. It was to the Earthlings, like playing a new type of cross-questions and silly answers, the rules of which they had not yet learned.

THROUGH the entire session, which lasted about two hours, not once did one of the five take down a single note or crack the slightest smile. It was the most bizarre experience the prisoners had ever had. Llamkin participated in the discussion by talking incomprehensible jargon with his confreres and explaining certain points in English to the Earthlings. Shayne noted that they were slowly becoming interested in the weird interrogation in spite of themselves.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the five abnormally tall Martians gravely took their leave through the door they had entered. Llamkin turned his full attention to his guests.

"Two hours at a time is long enough for each examination, according to Dneirf," he explained. "They would like to meet you here at four-hour intervals—except during rest periods and mealtimes, of course."

"What?" exclaimed the President in surprise. "How long is this to continue? Surely not as long as a session of Congress?"

"Perhaps," said Llamkin seriously. "At least until the savants discover your humorous point of view. But they will certainly succeed where I have failed."

"Like hell!" exploded Maurice Rynder. "If you think I'm going to sit around and wisecrack to your five stooges for six months, you're crazy. I've got to get Three Dimensional Pictures on the market. I ain't got that much time to give even to the President of the United States! Why—" Realizing just what he had said, the cinema magnate broke off in confusion.

The President glanced at the luridly attired little fat man and chuckled.

"I'm afraid, Mr. Rynder," he said dryly, "that there is little else you can do—until we are rescued."

Hartman and Thomlineon began to protest angrily to their apparently omnipotent host. They switched to mention of money and quickly worked their way up through hints of punishment to violent threats of reprisal. Llamkin merely looked from one to the other of the indignant pair in stony silence. Elaine finally sought to pour nil on the troubled waters.

"Mr. Lamblkin," she said in her most persuasive voice as she turned the glamor on full blast. "Surely you're not serious about keeping us prisoners any longer? Why don't you be a good sport and call all this"—she gestured prettily yet helplessly with her hands—"this off? There are so many more interesting things you and I could be doing in New York. And there are important things the President should be doing."

Llamkin surveyed her soberly. His blue eyes traveled over her lovely figure, from the sable crown of her head to the satin slippers on her feet. She blushed rosily, self-consciously under his inspection, wondering how he had carried her from her bedroom to the couch upon which she had awakened. She experienced a little pang of regret that she could not remember the thrill of it.

At the same time she had to acknowledge to herself his delicacy and consideration in at least putting her boudoir negligee over her gown.

"There is nothing as interesting and important, Miss Elliot," he answered in cold courtesy, "as the outcome of this experiment. And need I remind you that it is no longer necessary for you to exert yourself in order to be kind to me?"

IT was like a dash of cold water in her face. She stamped her foot indignantly.

"Oh-h-h, *you!*" she cried. "I'm not trying to be nice to you for any ulterior reason. It's you I'm thinking about. Haven't you sense enough to realize what it's going to mean when the President is missed today? Your very life is going to be the price!"

"I scarcely see what difference today will make. There has been a great deal of excitement for the past three weeks, but nothing critical, according to my radio reports. The vice-president is handling things quite nicely. Am I to infer that you are interested, in me, then, for myself alone?"

"Why, you—you conceited animated cartoon in technicolor! I wouldn't turn my head to look at you if you were the last man on Earth."

"We are not on Earth," he assured her gravely. "However, if I owe it, I thank you for your commercial interest in me while there."

Elaine was healthily normal. She had a mind and a will of her own. She couldn't resist the impulse that seized her.

Lifting her slim white hand, she slapped him squarely across the mouth.

Llamkin's head bobbed back, and an expression of astonishment crossed his features. Then his brows drew down level in anger. His hands darted out, grasped her roughly, and crushed her against his broad chest. She gave vent to a little cry of alarm as his hands bruised her. It was Shayne who laid a remonstrating hand upon Llamkin's shoulder.

"Nix, Kid," the reporter said reprovingly. "Gents don't manhandle ladies! They either spank 'em or kiss 'em—or nothing. Elaine's not to blame for stringing you along. She was told to do it, or else. Lay off the gal, and I'll feed a line to your five fugitives from a freak show until their ears drop off. Why not? I've had plenty of practise with you."

Llamkin's face became tranquil again.

He released Elaine as swiftly as he had grabbed her.

"Of course," he said. "Thank you, Louis." Then he addressed all of them. "Come. I will show you your living quarters for the time you will be with us. A room has been prepared for each of you. And while it is true that I abducted all of you without your consent, I was set the example by two of you. I am sorry if you resent it, but it is too late now. All I can do is entertain you to the best of my ability and pledge you my solemn word of honor that you will be duly returned to Earth, safely and unharmed. I am sorry I lost my temper just now. You see, I had never been struck by a woman before."

HE turned and led the way out of the laboratory. In a sort of chastened silence the six Earthlings followed him. Impersonally, but solicitous of their comfort, Llamkin pointed out their private rooms.

"Your quarters are windowless, of course," he said. "But they are lighted and air-conditioned, and there is a bath adjoining each one. Whenever you like, I will gladly show you over the entire part of this building, which is Earth-conditioned. Every effort has been exerted to safeguard you from all possible danger. I do not think an accident can happen. But I must warn you not to attempt to explore or to escape without my permission.

"As I told you before, once outside of the boundary of these artificial Earth conditions, even I would succumb. You people couldn't withstand the physical change, not to mention the thousand other perils of a strange planet."

And that was distinctly that. Hartman and Thomlinson, the boldest and most resentful of the group, learned it within the next forty-eight hours.

CHAPTER XX

The Funny Catalyst

THERE was no exit or opening of any kind from the part of the building of which the Earthlings were permitted the run. The various rooms and corridors were on one floor, and it was impossible to ascertain whether there were floors above or below them. The only exit they could find was the door to the laboratory where they had met the funeral five, as Shayne dubbed the somber scientists. Even this door they found impossible to open when Llamkin was not with them.

So life settled into a queer routine of two hours of oral examination and four hours off. As the quizzes proceeded, they found themselves feeling less and less like doing anything between save resting. For the examinations became progressively harder. By the third one, the Martian savants began using various strange machines to check reactions. It became more like going through an exhaustive clinic each time.

And still the five pale giants were not satisfied. In desperation, Shayne and Rynder put on a vaudeville sketch to make them laugh. When that didn't work, they staged an act with Elaine in it. Still the sober-faced Martians did not even smile. It became a game and then a point of honor to make these queer beings laugh.

Even Llamkin grew soberer and more anxious with each meeting. Twice he had Shayne give a dissertation on wit, humor, and point of view. The President, who was used to applause and laughter at his bon mots, tried everything he knew from parody to political speeches, and failed miserably.

Then one morning when Llamkin went to awaken Elaine, the girl did not respond to his knock. He called her name and received no answer. But he heard a furtive sort of movement within, and he opened the door. An amazing scene met his eyes.

Seated languidly in a Martian chair was Elaine. She was in the grip of two huge green Kanobian servents, one of whom was holding her right forearm and was on the verge of making an intravenous injection from a hydrosylph—a Martian syringe plant which contained the nidir drug that produced a hypnosis and a complete paralysis of the brain.

"Stop!" cried Llamkin in a terrible voice. He sprang forward. "By what authority do you dare invade—"

He could get no further.

"The masters ordered it," articulated the second Kanobian in a hissing, sibilant voice, while the first green man simply jabbed down with his deadly needle bulb.

Furious, Llamkin whipped a slender ray gun from his blouse, aimed it, and pressed the finger stud. A thin lance of fire shot across in front of the indifferent girl and struck the Kanobian in the stomach. The huge green man winced and then simply exploded in a puff of billowing gas. He vanished into nothingness. Llamkin swung his deadly weapon at the second Kanobian who promptly fell to his knees and began babbling for his life.

Llamkin hesitated. He examined Elaine quickly and saw that she was not yet harmed, having merely had the first inoculating dose of the drug which would soon wear off.

"Very well," he said grimly. "Get out of here, and take this message to Dneirf. I will not permit the slightest harm to come to any one of our guests. I will not tolerate the smallest dangerous experiment. We do not know how Earth beings will react to Xzorculuan drugs. Now, go!"

The green giant fled precipitantly from the chamber. Llamkin glanced to see that the ventilating system was properly removing the gaseous cloud that had been the first Kanobian, and then he set about reviving the girl. When Elaine came out of her stupor she had no recollection of what had passed. Sighing in relief, Llamkin forebore telling her. There was no need alarming her, and it was up to him to see that nothing of like import happened again.

He intended speaking to Dneirf about the ugly occurrence, but he did not have

the opportunity to do so before the next period of interrogation.

It was on the third day—about the tenth or eleventh consultation—and everybody was desperate. Mentally exhausted, deathly weary of talk and argument and experiment, the nerves of the prisoners were worn almost to the snapping point. The game had gone stale.

After about an hour of futile questioning, which did not elicit even a civil reply, the five giants solemnly shook their heads. They had been growing sadder looking by the minute. They withdrew to one wall and conferred in low tones.

"If we only had a blackboard, we might give them a chalk talk," said Shayne wearily. "We've tried everything else."

"What is that?" Llamkin asked anxiously.

Shayne sighed. "Okay, here's another lecture, folks. A chalk talk is one of the things vaudeville artists starve at in this enlightened era. A man gives a nonsense lecture as he draws pictures on a blackboard. Then suddenly he turns the picture upside down, and it's something altogether different from what he has been drawing and talking about. And I feel like a chalk talk illustration right now."

To his mild astonishment, Llamkin grew overwhelmingly interested.

"That is supposed to be funny?" he inquired. "If I follow you, it is building up one point of view in the audience and then suddenly switching them to another without warning?"

"I didn't mean it, Kid, but you get the idea."

"It is the most sensible thing I have yet heard any of you mention as being considered humorous on Earth. Your suggestion has possibilities. And I have a medium with which you can work in my boyhood classroom. Excuse me for a few minutes."

"Mad Anthony—riding to the hounds again," groaned Shayne as Llamkin strode rapidly out of the laboratory.

"He's not mad!" said Elaine in quick resentment. "Your wisecracks are beginning to sound like Joe Miller to me. And you've talked yourself into a square corner this time. I only hope you can draw."

BEFORE an argument could take place, Dneirf and Bllyna came forward to rejoin them. The other three scientists wheeled out a queer and ponderous machine they had not used before.

"We have come to the conclusion," said Dneirf gravely, "that we have been applying the wrong method. Instead of exhausting you with trying to formulate into spoken language such an obviously intangible and elusive thing as humor, we have decided to use this machine. In English, it might be called a decalculator. This machine—you can see our colleagues adjusting it there—is a sort of psycho-analyzer.

"Electrically impulsed, it probes to the bottom of a mind and transcribes every process of thought and memory upon a set of metal plates. By using the decalculator on you in this fashion, we can consult the plates without troubling you any further with questions. It will only take a few minutes for each of you. The process is painless. All you have to do is seat yourself there under the head-cap and relax. I will ask Miss Elliot to oblige first."

The girl looked uneasily at the machine. It faintly resembled a barber chair crossed with a hair permanenter. Instead of a number of wires ending in curler attachments, a veritable forest of wires ran into a shining, inverted metal bowl above the chair. The bowl looked like a sun-lamp or a hair dryer. The wires led to a battery of dials and complicated recording equipment.

"It looks like an inventor's nightmare, doesn't it?" said the President. "But no harm has come to us yet."

"I'll do it," Elaine said wearily. "Anything for a laugh."

"That smells like an old gag to me," said the disgruntled reporter.

Elaine did not deign to reply. She walked across the floor and seated herself as the three giants at the machine directed. It was a comfortable seat at that.

One of the trio spun an adjustment wheel. It lowered the gleaming bowl until it covered and encircled her head

down to the line of her eyebrows. Another took up his station by the recording apparatus. The third moved over to a panel board of studs and switches and looked expectantly at Dneirf.

At that instant, Llamkin returned to the huge chamber. He took one look, and his eyes widened in horror. He dropped the paraphernalia he was carrying and cried out sharply in the weird chattering that passed for language between the giants.

"Hold!" he said. "What are you doing?"

Dneirf looked at him sadly.

"We are forced to the last resort, my son. There is nothing left but to use the decalculator."

"The decalculator? No! You can't do that, Dneirf!"

"It will explore the deepest nooks of the human mind," replied Dneirf. "If the explanation of humor is there—and it must be there—we will find it."

"But you know the subject will come from the decalculator a babbling idiot!" cried Llamkin. "That would be worse than murder. We can't do that."

Dneirf shrugged. "It is harsh, but it is certain."

"Have you told them what it will do to them?"

"No," admitted Dneirf honestly. "It would only cause possible violence."

"And rightly," Llamkin cried angrily. "Xyttus, don't you dare depress that primary switch! Elaine," he burst into English, "get—"

"SILENCE!" Dneirf almost shouted in cold fury, still speaking his native tongue. "What has come over you, Llamkin? Your whole life has been dedicated to this sacred purpose. The very life of our planet depends on waking our people from their apathy. We ask nothing of other worlds. We have the means of working out our own salvation. All we need is that tiny leaven, that minute spark which will rejuvenate the stagnant and passive minds of our race What are the brains of six Earthlings weighed against the entire world of Xzorculu?"

"What are they? I pledged my solemn word that they would be returned to their native planet unharmed. *You* promised me that when you sent me to Earth. And that's the way it shall be if the whole Solar System perish! Zarcol, get that Earth woman out of that chair!"

"No!" countermanded Dneirf in a commanding voice. "Instead, start the generators of the decalculator."

The tenseness of the situation communicated itself to the Earthlings, though they could not understand a single word of what was being said. But they could read actions, and Llamkin was giving them plenty to read. He leaped forward to the center of the chamber, made a lightninglike move of his hands. From inside his blouse he brought forth a glittering, needlelike tube.

"Touch that starting switch," he said in a terrible voice, "and I will blast all five of you out of existence as I would a Krulogru monster!"

This was a showdown with a vengeance. The five giants stared at Llamkin in calm horror It was obvious that their prize pupil was suddenly bereft of his senses. They must consider this new complication and their own imminent annihilation with philosophic abstraction. There was neither panic nor excitement in their attitudes. They simply stood there, arrested at the crucial point of their experiment, while they contemplated this alarming development.

"Llamkin," finally asked Dneirf mildly, "are you mad? Would you turn upon your own kind, your only friends—your entire race—for the sake of a few alien folk? Put away that ray tube, my son, and listen to reason."

"The only reason I'll listen to is your command to release that Earth woman from that decalculator, Dneirf. *You* are mad! Deliberately to make an imbecile out of that girl after pledging your sacred oath to protect each of these Earthlings from all harm Release her now—or die!"

There was utter silence for the space of a score of heartbeats while Dneirf reflected on this ultimatum. Then he calmly raised his hand to give the starting signal to Xyttus.

"I will die," he chose, without the slightest emotion in his voice. "We

will all die. And the blood of the entire world of Xzorculu shall be upon your faithless, renegade head."

At this fateful instant Bllyna caught Dneirf's arm.

"Wait! I see it. Llamkin has fallen in love with this Earth woman!"

Dneirf started slightly. He looked swiftly from his mutinous pupil to Elaine Elliot and back again. For the first time he was visibly perturbed.

"Llamkin!" he cried, aghast. "Is this true? Has Bllyna read you aright? Do you love this woman?"

STARTLED, Llamkin stared at the compassionate face of Bllyna. Then he turned and looked at Elaine.

The girl was watching him intently, uncomprehendingly, with steady, level eyes as she strove to understand what was taking place. The meeting of their glances was like an electric shock to Llamkin. A queer dizziness, and a sense of exaltation, seized him as Bllyna's accusation and Dneirf's question burned in his mind. Did he love Elaine Elliot—an Earth woman?

"By the elder gods of Xzorculu!" he cried in a strained and husky voice. "I *do!* I, a son of Xzorculu, a servant of science dedicated from infancy to this magnificent attempt to save my planet and my people—I have fallen in love with a woman of Earth who despises and laughs at me."

Slowly he lowered his head and covered his face with his trembling hands, the ray tube forgotten. Hot, stinging tears of grief and shame and mortification burned his eyes. The five giants waited patiently, making no overt moves at all. It was like a slow-motion dull spot in a movie scenario instead of a moment of sheer, tense drama.

It was like aiming a cannon that squirted water. . . .

The incongruity, the ironic jest, the stark insanity of the thing abruptly smote him. Llamkin experienced an uncontrollable impulse. Something Puckish, impish, perverse and devilish seemed to burst in his heart and well up through his brain in wave after wave of ironic glee. The queer and unpredictable god of laughter suddenly had him by the throat. Llamkin lowered his hands, threw back his head, and laughed.

For the first time since Louis Shayne had known him, the Kid from Mars was shouting with laughter!

But the stunned perplexity of the Earthlings was nothing, compared with the sheer incredulity of the five giants who knew what the situation was all about. They simply stood like cigar-store Indians and gaped at the man who laughed.

"Can't you see?" gasped Llamkin, going into a fresh gale at sight of Dneirf's ludicrous face. "The incongruity of it all? I—a son of Xzorculu—with fifty million miles of space and twenty thousand tenarcks of evolution between us—in love with a woman of Earth. Can't you see it's screamingly funny? Louis Shayne was right— He explained it to you yesterday— It's all in the point of view!"

Llamkin grew so weak that he collapsed upon the floor to lie there and shake with helpless mirth.

Slowly the idea dawned upon the Martians. Bllyna was the first to smile. Kartyl let out a yelp like a kicked pup. Zarcol uttered a croaking sound like a bullfrog in the marsh. Xyttus cackled shrilly, like an old maid in a village choir.

Dneirf snorted. That snort did it. It seemed to clear away the cobwebs of five thousand years.

"That's it—that's it!" Dneirf shouted, his words racing hysterically ahead of his willing mirth, idea clouds scudding before the wind of laughter. "We sent Llamkin to bring Earthmen to us for study, but first we made an Earthman out of him. We see their comic point of view, not through their analyses, but through Llamkin's eyes. He is the catalyst which presents their point of view!"

Instantly a chorus of Martian voices took up the song of laughter. For the first time in five thousand years, men of Xzorculu were shaking and rocking in hilarious mirth. They lay down on the floor in their hysteria, and rolled in Gargantuan glee.

Six bewildered and perplexed Earthlings sat uncomprehending in their seats and stared blankly. . . .

CHAPTER XXI

The Point of View

LAMKIN recovered first. He got to his feet and wiped the tears from his eyes. While the five scientists continued to shout with laughter, he motioned the five Earthmen to withdraw. Then he soberly approached the decalculator and raised the metal bonnet from Elaine's head with his own hands. He was grave now as he looked deep into her eyes, which were like the heart of a Kolsord blossom.

"Come, Elaine," he said in a tender voice, holding out his hand to her. "You are going back to Earth."

"*I* am going back?" she said, laying her slim hand in his as naturally as if it belonged there. "And what about the others?"

"They are going with you. Your mission and mine have been accomplished."

"Then—then you are going with us?"

"Only to take you home."

"You are coming back to—to this place?"

"Of course. It is my home."

"They laughed. Lamkin, what made them laugh? I never heard you laugh before."

"Would you really like to know?"

"Yes, I would. I don't understand. It—it seemed terrible, in a way. For a moment I thought you were going to kill them."

"It was terrible, what they were going to do to you. And then Bllyna discovered for us that I love you."

He said it in such a matter-of-fact way that its significance was not apparent to her for a minute.

"They were going to do something awful to me, and you—you stopped them because you—loved me?"

"Yes. And that was funny, so we laughed. And now they know how to laugh and what makes them laugh. Since they understand it themselves, they can teach it to all our people."

Tears sprang to Elaine Elliot's eyes. She placed her other hand in his.

"I don't think it's very funny, Lamkin," she said in a low voice. "I love you, too. I knew it when I slapped you."

This was a right to the heart and a left to the solar plexus. Llamkin's blue eyes widened in wonder and frank disbelief. Yet there was a dawning hope, a sort of reprieve-from-hell expression there that made Elaine want to cry. So she did.

"Elaine? Elaine!" he murmured softly as he gently enfolded her in his strong arms. Then, after a precious moment: "Shayne said a gentleman either spanks or kisses a lady, or does nothing. What must I do?"

Smiling through her tears, she raised her face toward his, and Llamkin did the proper thing.

"To think," she whispered, "that you couldn't figure things out for yourself. One of those—those giants had to discover it for you. How could Bllyna have seen what your own heart didn't know?"

"I guess," Llamkin answered softly, "because Bllyna is a woman."

Elaine stared at the smallest of the

[*Turn Page*]

great, bald-headed creatures. The Martians' raucous mirth had subsided. Still smiling, they gathered around Llamkin and Elaine, clucking and talking together in soft, marveling tones.

Impulsively the Earth girl reached forth her hand and laid it upon the hand of Bilyna. The giantess responded with a caressing squeeze. A bond of feminine understanding which recognized no caste, no creed, no world, was cemented between them.

"Go, Elaine with the other Earthlings who linger at the door," said Dneirf kindly. "We must confer with Llamkin."

Elaine looked up at Llamkin. He swept her boyishly up into his arms and smiled tenderly and then kissed her lightly upon the brow.

"I will join you soon, beloved Elaine," he assured her.

At the doorway Maurice Rynder voiced the opinion of all the Earthmen.

"Now if that ain't a helluva thing to laugh at. These freaks are crazy!"

"Yes, wasn't it?" agreed Elaine calmly. And that was all they got out of her.

IT was late when Llamkin entered the wing of the sleeping quarters in search of Elaine. The others had long since given up the puzzle and gone to bed. Elaine was wide awake and waiting when Llamkin tapped gently at her door. Quickly she admitted him.

Advancing with shining eyes, he kissed her heartily. Then he placed her in a chair and dropped down upon a hassock beside her and began to laugh quietly.

"Well, it's all settled," he finally explained. "I know that Louis Shayne and all the rest still do not believe they are on Mars. They do not believe any of us are Martians, and it's just as well. It is very funny, and it makes no difference. Don't wrinkle your own fair brow in perplexity, my darling. I know that you have your own moments of doubt, but you alone of them all shall have proof that your mind cannot refute. We are returning to Earth in the morning just as we came to Mars.

"Dneirf and the others are already placing your slumbering compatriots in a renewed state of suspended animation. They shall be returned to their own beds in their own homes exactly as they were when I abducted them. It will all seem like a dream to them—as if they had taken an overdose of those absurd Rainbow Slumber Vitamin Pellets."

Elaine wrinkled her nose prettily at this thought and began to laugh. Llamkin, having discovered the magic secret of laughter, experienced no difficulty in joining her.

"Wouldn't it be funny if they gave testimonials to the Rainbow Company?" and Elaine Then, swiftly sobering: "But how about me?"

"You, my sweet, shall return to Earth in full consciousness of the voyage. Dneirf is taking us back so he can return the gravity ship to Mars. I shall remain on Earth."

"But, Lambkin, I thought you were going to give plans and inventions and scientific knowledge—the secret of your space ship to mankind. What about the gifts and honors your guests were to take back?"

Llamkin's face grew sad again.

"After I related in detail to Dneirf and the others all that happened to me, it was decided that Earth is not yet ready for such tremendous advances in science. Only when all mankind has grown together in a bond of brotherhood and common humanity will it be safe to give men greater weapons than they already possess. Minor scientific achievements, yes. I am to work them out gradually, as though I were developing them upon Earth. I shall feed them to my adopted planet as my judgment tells me they are ready to receive them.

"Of course, I will secretly build a radio-penetrision machine so I can keep in touch with my mentors here on Mars. Who knows, soon perhaps, men of Xzorculu will again return to Earth bearing even greater gifts that I have promised. In the meantime, it must be as though my trip had never been. In all my conscious moments I shall blot every reference to Mars out of my speech and out of my mind. Elaine, Elaine, for your sweet sake I am renouncing my own world for yours.

"My mission has been accomplished, thanks mainly to you and Louis Shayne, and I am free to go. I am virtually an Earthman in everything save the incident of birth. I know I'll be dumb in many ways until I catch on. But, Elaine, will you have an Xzorculuan redhead? Will you marry the—Kid from Mars?"

"Will I? Will I?" cried Elaine fiercely. "Just let anybody try to keep me from it! We can live on my income until you adjust yourself to our way of life and make a place for yourself. But, darling, you say we have been absent a month. How are we going to clear you of a kidnaping charge? How—"

Llamkin interrupted her with a kiss.

"Don't worry your lovely head about that for a minute," he said, chuckling. "They'll be returned as mysteriously as they were taken, and no harm done. Do you think these men are going to tell such a wild story as theirs to a disbelieving world? As for income, John Hartman has a fortune in uncut diamonds that belongs to me. There are a thousand things I can turn my talents to on Earth.

"But always my most important task will be that of loving you. Come, my beloved, and I will show you how Dneirf is putting our friends in cold storage for their voyage—putting a few jokers in a cold deck, as Confucius would say."

* * * * *

IT was dusk when Louis Shayne awoke. He roused himself with a start and glared wildly about him. He rubbed his eyes and looked around disbelievingly. He was in his own bed in the pent-house suite of the Telecast Plaza.

Uttering a wild cry, he threw aside the bedclothes and bounded to his feet. He rushed madly into the living room, halted in amazement.

Sitting in an easy-chair, properly dressed for the evening, was a perfectly calm Llamkin. He was reading the newspaper accounts of the mysterious reappearance of the President of the United States, the eminent capitalist, Colonel Thomlinson, and the well known publisher, John Hartman, after an inexplicable absence of nearly two months.

He looked up quizzically at the sports reporter.

"Better hurry and get dressed, Louis," he advised. "We have a dinner date with Elaine."

"You — what — huh?" spluttered Shayne. He was all but speechless while incoherence and chaos battled for possession of his mind. "I—how—Hell, that wasn't any dream! Or—or was it?"

"Get dressed," repeated Llamkin, stretching and yawning in a completely normal fashion. "I've been waiting for you."

Without another word, Shayne turned and stumbled toward the bathroom. He turned on the cold shower and stepped into the stall without removing his pajamas.

He was still in a daze an hour later when he sat in the cocktail lounge of the hotel in company with Llamkin and Elaine. With the third stiff drink he began to thaw out. He started to talk.

"There's no use trying to pass this business off as a joke," he said in a weary voice. His sharp eyes were looking searchingly from Llamkin to Elaine. "I know damned well that was no dream. You pulled a fast one on us all, Lambkin. But be a good guy and tell me how you did it. Were we cooped up out on Long Island somewhere? But no—the papers say Hartman and Thomlinson were missing two months. And the President!

"The F.B.I. boys would have found us long before this. We must have been on some desert really. Yes, that's it! That desert scene of red, burning sands we saw. Where were we, Kid? In the Arabian Desert?"

"No," answered Llamkin, exchanging smiling glances with Elaine.

THE orchestra began playing a request number, a number requested by Elaine. It was "Stardust."

"No, of course not!" went on Shayne, knitting his brows in intensive thought. "The architecture of that place—that crazy laboratory—these giants from a movie set—they were so real. I— Oh, hell, Lambkin, I give up! Tell me the

truth. Are you really from Mars? I won't laugh, and I swear I'll believe whatever you say."

Llamkin got to his feet and held out his arms to Elaine. She rose to dance with him.

"Louis," said Llamkin solemnly, "I wouldn't kid you for anything in the world. Of course, I'm the Kid from Mars! Mars—Arizona."

Then he and Elaine looked into each other's eyes and burst into a gale of laughter. Still laughing, they moved arm in arm out to the dance floor.

Louis Shayne stared after them, his jaw slack, his eyes blank. His right hand was clutching his half-emptied liquor glass.

"I don't get it," he said at length. "It must be the point of view."

○

COMING NEXT ISSUE

A Non-Stop Trip from Prehistoric Times to the Future World

IN

A MILLION YEARS TO CONQUER

A Complete Book-Length Novel of An Eternal Quest

By HENRY KUTTNER

The Ally of Science

A Guest Editorial

By ARTHUR K. BARNES

Famous Scientifiction Author and Creator of the Gerry Carlyle Stories

IN the public mind, the relationship of science fiction to Science is that of sycophant, a sort of adolescent hanger-on basking in reflected glory. Yet a close examination of this relationship will reveal a curious truth: that the power of Science is easily over-estimated, while the importance of science fiction is just as easily under-rated.

There is a widespread idea throughout the country today that scientists hold the absolute key to solving the nation's social and economic difficulties. The public believes that formulas can be evolved to solve social difficulties as magically as they get results in natural sciences.

Arthur K. Barnes

That notion is wrongfully conceived. Dr. Wesley C. Mitchell, president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, recently debunked it when he declared that all of the scientists in the country put together do not know enough to solve many of the problems a democracy faces.

Scientific research is a *social process* as much as business, or politics, or religion, and as such is interwoven with other social processes, influencing them and being influenced by them.

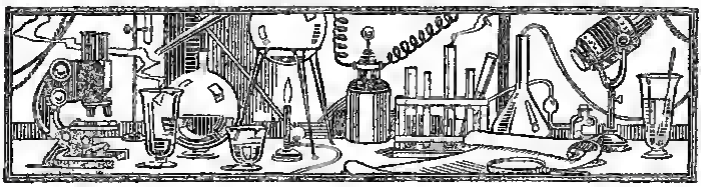
The idea that Science is self-sufficient —which is the fundamental fallacy of Technocracy—is a dangerous misconception. Science will achieve miracles, but not without outside help.

Here we approach the important role that science fiction plays. It is the function of literature to fuse and integrate the disparate elements of life. Science fiction, by popularizing the advancement of Science, paves the way for ready public acceptance of the above-mentioned miracles.

History is full of examples of bigotry and ignorance stifling scientific advance. Thanks to the public press, technical journals, and particularly science fiction, however, we shall see little of this in the future.

Its beneficent propaganda is smoothing the path that Science is traveling toward human betterment; by introducing the tremendous scope of Science to minds in business and political and religious fields, it is already preparing to bring the promise of Science to triumphant fruition.

Science fiction would not exist without Science, it is true; but it is conceivable that even mighty Science might find the going a bit rougher without the aid of its little ally, science fiction.

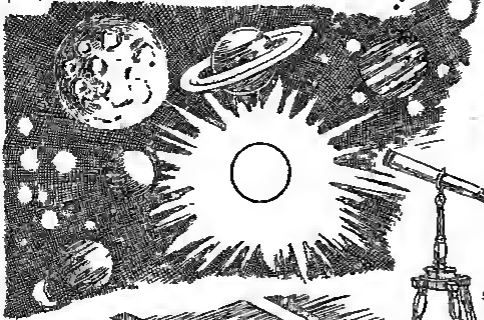


THEY CHANGED THE WORLD

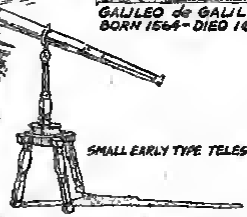
The LIFE STORY of GALILEO de GALILEI

WHO FIRST USED THE TELESCOPE

PART OF THE GREAT RENAISSANCE AFTER THE DARK AGES, GALILEO BROUGHT LIGHT AFTER SEVENTEEN CENTURIES OF SCIENTIFIC DARKNESS AND STAGNATION. HIS FLAMING GENIUS DEVISED THE FIRST COMPOUND TELESCOPE. HE WAS THE FIRST MAN IN HISTORY TO SEE THE CRATERS OF THE MOON, THE RINGS OF SATURN, THE MOONS OF JUPITER, THE PHASES OF VENUS, THE SUN-SPOTS, AND, THE SEPARATE STARS OF THE MILKY WAY!

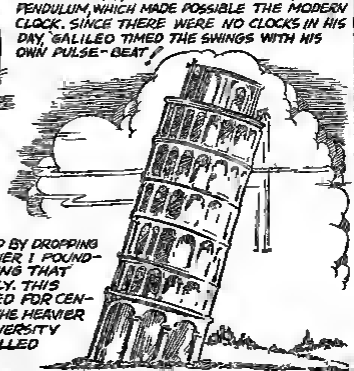


GALILEO de GALILEI — BORN 1564 - DIED 1642



SMALL EARLY TYPE TELESCOPE

AS A BOY, GALILEO TINKERED WITH MECHANICAL TOYS. AT 18, WATCHING LAMPS SWINGING IN A CATHEDRAL, HE DISCOVERED THE LAWS OF THE PENDULUM, WHICH MADE POSSIBLE THE MODERN CLOCK. SINCE THERE WERE NO CLOCKS IN HIS DAY, GALILEO TIMED THE SWINGS WITH HIS OWN PULSE-BEAT!



IN 1591, AT 27, GALILEO STARTLED THE WORLD BY DROPPING TWO WEIGHTS — ONE 10 POUNDS AND THE OTHER 1 POUND — FROM THE LEANING TOWER OF PISA, PROVING THAT BOTH STRUCK THE GROUND SIMULTANEOUSLY. THIS SHATTERED ARISTOTLE'S THEORY, BELIEVED FOR CENTURIES AND NEVER QUESTIONED, THAT THE HEAVIER WEIGHT WOULD FALL FASTER. BUT THE UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS, STEEPED IN IGNORANCE, CALLED GALILEO A HERETIC AND SORCERER!

Next Issue: SIR WILLIAM PERKIN,


DESPITE SUCH STUPID OPPOSITION, GALILEO WENT ON WITH HIS EXPERIMENTS. HE DISCOVERED THE LAWS OF LEVERS, OF FALLING BODIES, AND HYDROSTATICS, STILL FURTHER BLASTING HOLES IN ARISTOTLE'S RIDICULOUS THEORIES. ALMOST ALONE, GALILEO FOUNDED THE METHOD OF MODERN SCIENCE — EXPERIMENTATION. AT ONE TIME, WITH TWO FRIENDS HE SLEPT BEFORE A CAVE, TO STUDY ITS POISONOUS VAPORS. HIS TWO FRIENDS DIED, AND GALILEO HIMSELF NEARLY SUCCUMBED.
IN 1610, GALILEO MADE HIS TELESCOPE, AND PROVED THAT THE EARTH REVOLVED ABOUT THE SUN, JUST AS JUPITER'S MOON REVOLVED AROUND JUPITER. GALILEO PUBLISHED A BOOK, SUPPORTING THIS COPERNICAN THEORY, AND DENOUNCING ARISTOTLE AND THE CHURCH. ENRAGED AT THIS BLASPHEMY, THE POPE CALLED GALILEO BEFORE THE DREADED INQUISITION, IN 1633. OLD AND WEAK, GALILEO WAS FORCED TO RECANT HIS PROOF THAT EARTH MOVES AROUND THE SUN. IT IS SAID THAT IN THE NEXT BREATH, GALILEO STUBBORNLY MURMURED "NEVERTHELESS, EARTH DOES MOVE!"
PERSECUTED BY THE CHURCH, GALILEO RETIRED, OLD AND BROKEN-SPIRITED. HE WENT BLIND IN 1637, AND DIED WITHOUT SEEING HIS GREAT SCIENTIFIC WORK ACCEPTED. IN THE YEAR HE DIED, 1642, NEWTON WAS BORN. IT WAS PARTICULARLY OF GALILEO THAT NEWTON SAID — "IF I HAVE SEEN FURTHER THAN MOST MEN, IT IS BECAUSE I HAVE STOOD ON THE SHOULDERS OF GIANTS."

The World Without

A Complete Hall of Fame Novelet

By BENSON HERBERT

EDITOR'S NOTE: Some stories are forgotten almost as soon as they are printed. Others survive the acid test of time.

SCIENTIFICTION HALL OF FAME STORY

Because Benson Herbert's brilliant story, "The World Without," has stood this test, we are nominating it for SCIENTIFICTION'S HALL OF FAME.

In each issue we will nominate—and reprint—another favorite of the past.

Will you vote for your favorite? Write and tell us what it is.

We hope in this way to bring a new permanence to the science fiction gems of yesterday and to perform a real service for the science fiction devotees of today and tomorrow.

CHAPTER I

The Challenge

AROUND the dinner-table, in the fashionable evening clothes of the day, were gathered all the white people worthy of note in Cairo. Above their subdued conversation could be heard the dictatorial voice of Mr Parling, the mathematician. Broad-shouldered, stout, but not fat, he dominated the company and delivered his speech with the gusto and rhetoric of an orator. He was a perfect type of dinner guest.

He would emphasize a point of his discourse with such a violent blow of his fist on the table that it threatened to spill the wine.

Opposite him, with glowering eyes, sat Dr. Klington, philosopher and amateur archeologist. His lean, hard frame, long ascetic features, and hair of the color and texture of fine copper wires, were in utter contrast to the appearance of the speaker.

For more years than either of them would care to admit, they had waged a wordy war, mainly through the medium of the press. Few were the scientific controversies in which the one participated without the opposition of the other. Now, for the first time, they had encountered each other in person. The guests who knew the inside story wet their lips in anticipation.

Their amiable host had realized too late, and with a deep sense of chagrin, the trouble he might cause by inviting both to the same dinner. He trembled at the thought of the consequence of his tactless act. What nonsense was Mr. Parling saying now—

"And it is my firm opinion, based upon irrefutable theory, that our Universe is composed of a great number of three-dimensional worlds. They exist side by side in a fourth dimension, just as the two-dimensional leaves of a book lie side by side in a third dimension."

Mr Parling droned on. The host wondered if his idea of allowing everyone present to speak upon his own special subject hobby was as good as he had first thought it. His wondering was suddenly terminated by a low, highly cultivated, insistent voice. The inevitable had happened at last. Dr. Klington had interrupted the thread of Mr. Parling's discourse.

"I beg to question that latter statement of yours, Mr. Parling. Such an utterly absurd idea can have no foundation when opposed by the doctrine of the very keenest brain of the last century. I am referring to the eminent and profound scientist, the Frenchman, Henri Poincare."

"Henri Poincare? He was a mathematician, yet he was also a philosopher. Like all philosophers, he was a dreamer!"

A buzz of excited voices swept around the table, for this was a direct attack upon Klington.

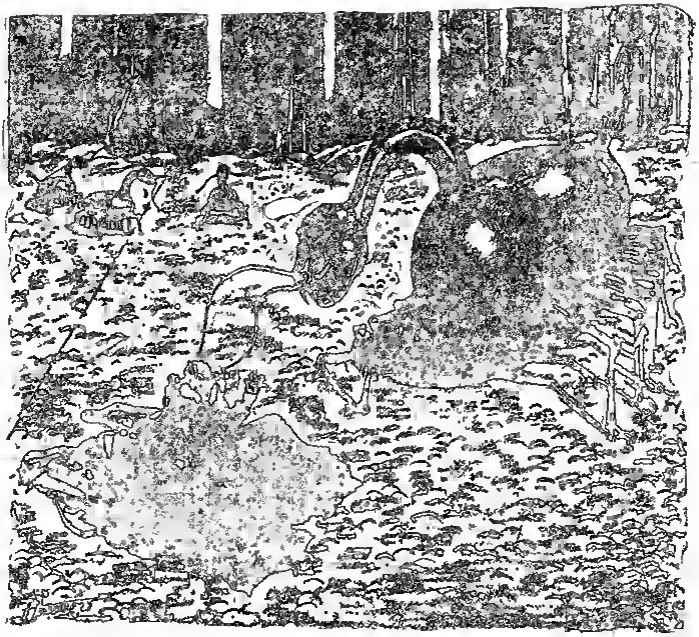
DEVELOPMENTS after that threatened to depart from mere discussion and become a brawl, in which the excited guests did not hesitate to join. The affair promised to be a welcome relief from the boring speeches which had hitherto marred the evening. The host's voice was heard occasionally above the tumult, pleading but futile.

"Now, gentlemen, do be a little more quiet, please!"

Events were brought to an abruptly silent standstill, broken only by faint whisperings. The booming voice of Parling had suddenly roared out, commanding everyone to shut up.

"Dr. Klington," he said in a quieter tone,

A Strange New Realm Beyond All Sense



An incredible, nightmarish monster, ten yards long, was warily feeling his head with a set of antennae

now that silence had been restored, "could direct experimental evidence convince you of the truth of my assertion?"

"It certainly would." Klington smiled sarcastically.

"If you care to call at my bungalow tomorrow morning, I shall be pleased to offer you such evidence."

Klington did not fail to keep the appointment. He was let into the bungalow by Perling himself. They were both somewhat stiff and cold in manner as they walked to the sitting room. Klington haughtily took a seat.

He was instantly aware of a strange sweetish aroma that faintly pervaded the atmosphere of the room. But, on looking around, he could not see its source. His antagonist stood before him in his characteristic Colossus of Rhodes attitude, with legs wide apart. Parling began to speak.

"You probably know that the firm of construction engineers, for which I work, is at present building a dam across the White Nile in order to facilitate irrigation."

The philosopher nodded assent.

"While excavating for the foundations on the bank of the river, the workmen came across a sealed chamber hollowed out in rock face. Within the chamber was discovered a sarcophagus. It was temporarily transported to my bungalow, en route to the British Museum. There it is, behind your chair."

Klington turned his head and perceived the origin of the odor. It was a stone burial receptacle of the usual type. An inspection of the interior showed nothing more startling than mummified remains and a scroll of some material, probably papyrus, with an inscription on the outer surface.

"I understand you know something about archeology," said Parling. "Can you tell me what these hieroglyphics mean?"

"Certainly . . . This is rather strange. It means—Before Isis existed, this was. Very

peculiar. But what does this have to do with the question?"

"You will soon see."

PARLING took the scroll and unrolled it. Within it he revealed a flexible bar of some bright purplish material, about three feet long and two inches wide. One end of the bar was fitted into a small transparent globe containing a yellow liquid. The bar could apparently slide right through the globe, since a groove had been made for it.

Parling assumed a confident, overbearing manner and the light of triumph gleamed in his eye. He pushed the rod till the end projected about four inches beyond the other side of the globe.

"I found it entirely by accident," he said softly.

"Found what?" said Klington, puzzled yet a little contemptuous.

"The secret, of course," said Parling. "Now watch the end of the bar carefully."

Slowly he continued to push the rod through the bowl. All at once Klington began to think he was being hypnotized.

He could no longer see the end of the rod. Four inches from the bowl there was firm solid matter. Beyond that was nothing! Parling chuckled at his astonishment.

"You're wondering where the end of it has gone, eh? Well, you see that it's perfectly flexible. Just where it ends, it has undergone a double right-angle bend. Through some unique property conferred upon it, no doubt, by the presence of the liquid in the globe, one of these bends is in the fourth dimension. The other bend naturally brings it into some other world parallel to our own. It certainly is not in our world." He passed his hand through the space where the missing end of the bar would normally have been. "I defy you to explain the phenomenon in any other way."

Klington was decidedly skeptical.

"How do I know you aren't tricking me?" he demanded.

Parling scowled and thrust a finger before the other's eyes. It was stiff, lifeless and almost brittle.

"See this finger? I placed my hand on the rod and moved it along toward the vanished end, attempting to follow the bend into another world. I succeeded! This finger is what it cost me. The chances against the other end of the rod being on the surface of a planet were billions to one. It is not surprising that my finger emerged into the frightful cold of outer space."

Klington's lean face showed a curious mixture of expressions. Clearly his doubt struggled with conviction. Parling was speaking again as he clamped the rod and globe to a mechanism on the table.

"With the aid of this vernier arrangement, I can project the bar along the fourth dimension for any desired distance. It will be correct to the ten-thousandth part of a centimeter. I rigged it up this morning, so it would be ready for you. In order to convince you completely, I propose to make a journey into one of the many universes parallel to our own. Is your philosophical courage equal to such a trip?"

There was only one answer that a man like Klington could give to such a challenge.

"But how can you be sure that the world we enter will be hospitable? It is not only necessary to land on the surface of a planet. That world will have to be moving at the same speed as ours and in the same direction. Otherwise it will be impossible to transfer from one to the other. Also, of course, the correct atmospheric and temperature conditions will have to be found."

"That's easily arranged. Nothing simpler. First of all, we'll fix the end of the bar at a certain distance and slide a thermometer along it. Then we'll send out a barometer, a container to get a sample of the air to be analyzed, and a camera to see how far from the surface of the planet we are. If that universe isn't suitable, we'll simply alter the distance by means of the vernier and try another. Shall we start now?"

Carefully they began the hunt for a suitable cosmos. Klington soon lost the last traces of doubt. The two men forgot all their former antagonism in the common interest of the search. They became as enthusiastically excited as a couple of schoolboys.

The method adopted for projecting the thermometer along the fourth dimension was ingenious yet simple. A loop of cord was passed round the rod and attached to the instrument. With the help of a close fitting, flexible sleeve around the bar, the thermometer could easily be pushed along it without the hands of the operator coming in contact with the other world. Since the thermometer was bound to the bar, it was forced to follow the bend into the fourth dimension. Other objects were treated similarly.

In all the first attempts, the mercury in the thermometer was frozen solid. After a week's work, they found the end of the bar melted clean off. Apparently the last attempt had projected it into the interior of a sun.

By this time the sarcophagus had been removed. But Parling secretly retained the purple rod and globe in order to continue the experiment.

At last they discovered a world whose temperature was quite tolerable, only eight degrees Centigrade. Disappointment awaited them on analyzing a sample of the atmosphere, however. An uncomfortably large percentage of chlorine was present. But this did not deter them. Klington suggested obtaining gas masks with small tanks of liquid oxygen.

They took a photo with a clockwork-shuttered camera, weighted to swing the lens toward the centre of gravity of the new world. A firm, grayish ground was revealed about forty feet away. Long, slender, black stems stood ten feet high and five yards apart. The clearness of the print indicated that the ground was almost at rest relative to Earth.

AFTER getting a rope ladder, they came to their final difficulty. The flexible bar could not possibly bear their weight. But even this the two scientists managed to overcome.

All of the ladder, except a foot of one end, was projected into the outer world. The visible end of the ladder was fastened to a stout stanchion anchored deep in the wall, and then disengaged entirely from the bar.

The vertical in the other world was inclined at an angle of thirty degrees in relation to that of Earth. To transfer themselves from one world to another, all the dimension-travelers had to do was grasp the visible rope of the ladder. Then they could feel along it with their hands till they came to the next invisible rung, grasp it, and pull.

A fortnight after their first meeting, all was ready for the journey of exploration they intended to make. They donned their masks with eager haste. Quickly they strapped on haversacks containing a fortnight's supply of food, and the oxygen tanks. They attached leaden weights to their feet in order to counteract the effect of the small amount of gravitation they had discovered in the new world.

Parling at last stood by the ladder.

"Are you ready?" he breathed.

Klington nodded, too excited for words. For a moment, Parling fumbled about with invisible hands for the invisible rung. He gave a tug, and silently vanished.

After an instant of hesitation, Klington followed.

CHAPTER II

Weird New World

THE first sensations Klington experienced were the change of direction in the pull of his weight, through an angle of thirty degrees, and an immediate drop in temperature. As he clambered down, the ladder was swaying with the descent of Parling below him. Klington suddenly appreciated the thick coat he had brought with him.

Rung by rung he lowered toward a land never trodden before by human feet. The chlorine gas present in the atmosphere, though not dense enough to prevent distant vision, gave everything an unearthly green tinge. The tops of the forest of black stems came into sight. He observed that the tip of each stem branched off into short, pointed spikes.

A few more rungs, and with a thrill of anticipation, Klington stepped from the ladder to the ground. Vision was remarkably clear except for the upper heavens, which were blotted out completely by clouds of green.

The widely separated black growths offered almost no obstruction to his view. The ground was pitted with straight, deep ruts, varying in width from eight to ten feet, and leading in every direction. Where two ruts ran together, there occurred a circular pit. Klington could not judge the depth of the pits because of the jet blackness of the interior.

Some indefinable quality of strangeness about the landscape seemed to be just eluding his detection. Something was puzzling him, and he could not locate it, for it was entirely different from anything he had previously experienced. His confused mind groped as if in blindness. He turned to express his bewilderment to Parling, and and found him closely examining the nearest black hole.

Its texture was smooth and glossy, its width a mere inch, surprisingly thin for such a length. Every few seconds it quivered gently. Was it a plant growth? If so, it had no terrestrial counterpart.

Cautiously Parling put out his hand and felt the velvety surface. With a cry of fright he recoiled suddenly, but it was too late. The thing gave a swift tremor and lashed about with irresistible violence. Parling was instantly flung off his feet and hurled over the edge of a circular fissure behind him!

Klington rushed to the hole and peered. He saw nothing, but heard a curious slithering sound—and a despairing voice.

"Quick, Klington! I'm on some kind of slippery ledge. I can't hold on much longer!"

Their ladder was a hundred feet long, in case the new world they had entered moved away relative to Earth. With great presence of mind, Klington dropped the loose end into the pit. He held it firm while Parling clambered up. The scientist had not been injured.

"Phew! What kind of plant is that?" Parling gasped. "Was that a reflex action? Wait here a minute. That darkness has reminded me."

PARLING climbed up the ladder and vanished into the world of their birth.

Despite all of Klington's philosophy, he could not forbear a twinge of uneasiness as he waited alone in this world of unknown perils. Suppose Parling, prompted by their former antagonism, pulled the ladder back into the bungalow, leaving Klington stranded.

But Parling's immediate return put his thought to shame. The scientist reappeared with two electric torches.

"Might need them," Parling remarked shortly. "Should have thought of them in the first place."

Now they felt ready to begin a tour of exploration. But before they left, Parling attached a large white sheet to the top portion of the ladder, to serve as a guide on their return journey. From a point half-way up the ladder, the surrounding land was surveyed to determine which direction they should take.

"Notice anything peculiar about the horizon?" asked Parling.

That was what had been puzzling Klington. There was no horizon! The desolate plain, on which they were situated, moved upward in front, behind, and on the right, in a great concave sweep—and never ended. It continued on and on, mounting higher. Hundreds of miles away it was finally lost to view in the green mists of the sky. Only on the extreme left was there a short semblance of a horizon, where a definite edge could be seen.

This certainly was no ordinary planet they were visiting. There was no sun in the heavens. But a brilliant glow on the left lit up everything clearly. It seemed to proclaim the presence of some solar body below the brief horizon.

Parling discerned a mighty chain of mountains on the right. For some reason, it had the appearance of hanging over their heads, and was about fifty miles away as near as could be judged. Toward these mountains they finally decided to make their way.

With their rifles and a plentiful supply of ammunition, they set off. Walking was by no means difficult. The fissures were easily cleared at a step for the leaden weights were insufficient to make up for the entire gravitational deficit.

They covered about twelve miles without a single mishap or an encounter with any inhabitant of this desolate region. Then they called a halt for a meal.

The gas masks Parling and Klington wore were quite different from the type used in the first World War. They permitted free movement of the mouth and could be adjusted in a moment.

AFTER a short meal, the march was resumed. Within an hour they emerged from the forest of black holes and found themselves on a gently sloping plain. Entirely free of fissures and of a much harder, though not rocky character, it led directly toward the foot of the mountains.

The chain of crags so far surpassed any earthly heights that they were tremendously awe-inspiring. Composed of a dazzling, smooth, white material, they rose sheer, absolutely vertical, from the plain to a height of at least twelve miles.

The puny Terrestrials were confounded by the breath-taking revelation. Consternation, dismay, terror, admiration, seized them in turn as they gazed upon the magnificence of those sharp white peaks crowned in green mists. In perfect order they stood, all in a straight line, all of similar shape. Like a line of guards, they seemed to be shielding the mysteries of the land beyond.

As broad at the top as they were at the bottom, many overlapped or were in actual contact in parts. At most, only a narrow crevice separated them. Each peak was of a uniform width of four or five miles. Measured in the direction in which the travelers were going, they appeared to be exceedingly thin for their height.

Parling and Klington pushed rapidly across the plain. They were burning with curiosity to discover the secret of those celestial crags. What kind of world was this, in which Nature was so lavish and so—regular?

Such was the slightness of gravity that by the time Klington's watch indicated that Cairo was in darkness, they were only a mile from the nearest peak. Speechless with astonishment at the close view of the monstrous mass, and weary with exhaustion, they camped on the plain. Quickly they prepared for sleep. All this time the brilliancy of the illumination had neither diminished nor increased.

Parling was suddenly awakened by a hissing whisper from Klington.

"Parling! Lie still and tell me what you hear!"

A moment of utter silence followed before Parling whispered back.

"Not the slightest sound."

"Put your ear on the ground, then."

"Yes! I hear a faint thudding sound."

There could be no doubt about it. Every thirty seconds a distinct booming noise was heard. Was it imagination, or did the ground actually rise and fall gently at each boom? Did this portend the approach of some unknown danger?

Barely had they fallen asleep again when Parling was aroused by a peculiar sensation on his brow. He opened his eyes and started up in horror, unable to shout a warning to Klington. His vocal cords were momentarily paralyzed.

He gaped at an incredible nightmare monster, ten yards long and with ten spidery legs on each side. Its head was set on a long, thin, arching neck. Warily it was feeling his head with a set of antennae that branched from the place where its nose should have been!

PARLING stumbled over Klington, instantly awakening him. Grabbing his rifle, he fired haphazardly. The Stygian beast immediately turned and galloped with tremendous velocity toward a crevice between two mountains. It vanished.

The two men stared wildly for a full minute before recovering their wits. Then Klington spoke shakily.

"Well, that's the first sample of Otherworld animal life we've had. If the rest are like that, we won't have to drag out our visit too long!"

From then on, one watched while the other slept. They regretted the lack of fuel, for the cold seemed more intense when lying still.

At six a. m., Cairo time, they prepared to set off once more. Parling stood up and faced Klington.

"We have a choice before us. We can either return at once to the ladder or continue to the other side of the barrier through the crevice. We don't know what dangers we will meet there. For myself, I am curious to find out what lies behind that white wall. But the object of our expedition is accomplished. You are thoroughly convinced of the truth of my theory. So I am quite willing to retrace our steps if you do not care to proceed."

Klington's answer was brief and calmly to the point.

"I move that we push on at once."

That settled the question. A few minutes later they stood at the foot of the nearest mountain, examining with great wonder its smooth, polished surface. The wildest imaginings filled their brains as they surveyed the colossal structure.

"Surely this must be artificial," said Parling in an awed tone, as Klington tested its hardness by kicking it.

"An artificial barrier over ten miles high is incredible," retorted Klington.

"Nevertheless we have seen many incredible things in the last few hours. My opinion is that on the other side we shall find the builders of this wall. Think what a tremendous degree of civilization they must possess for their engineers to construct such a huge barrier!"

Before he could theorize further, the two were fighting for their lives. A horde of creatures, similar to the one they had previously seen, were rushing down upon them from the mountain pass It was useless to flee. The monsters galloped along at more than two hundred miles an hour.

Despair gripped the hearts of the Terrestrials as they fired into the midst of the advancing mass. As if by magic, the leviathans instantly dispersed to all sides and sought shelter. Apparently it was the sound of the explosions that they could not withstand.

FREQUENTLY in their journey through the pass the travelers were attacked by the horrible denizens of the mountains. But noise never failed to frighten off the loathsome beasts.

The way through the pass was rough and difficult. Often Parling and Klington could barely scrape through between the two smooth walls. The path, moreover, was steep. It rose to an elevation of several hundred feet about half-way and descended as steeply on the other side.

If it had not been for the advantage of lesser gravity, they could never have performed the feat. As it was, over five hours were required to pierce through to the other side. The latter portion of the journey was beset with dangers, owing to the increasing slipperiness and unevenness of the road.

At last their arduous struggle was rewarded. They safely maneuvered a tortuous gully, wedged themselves through a narrow cleft. Abruptly they came in sight of the concealed domain behind the barrier.

The most striking thing about the new territory was the fact that every object in it, except the glistening white cliffs behind, was red A great red plain stretched before the daring Terrestrials Traversed by numerous folds, it was covered with a low, red, bushy vegetation. In the plants swarmed myriad forms of almost microscopic life, something like mundane insects—but all red.

Each step they took, a squelching noise and a red viscous ooze emerged in slow trickles from beneath the vegetation. Several miles away from the cliffs the land appeared to be in deep darkness

Of Parling's anticipated mighty civilization and great engineers, there was, to his keen disappointment, not a single sign He still hoped, however, that they might live underground. How else could they explain the regular booming sound they had heard on the gray plain? Apparently it was coming from the bowels of the earth.

While Parling was pondering the problem, Klington suddenly grew alarmed Seizing his binoculars, he stared intently through them at the green sky.

"Parling, look straight up," he said tensely "There's a vast white thing falling through the green clouds! It frightens me."

Parling, extremely startled, looked up also. Were his senses playing him tricks? Had his mind given way under the strain of the recently uncanny happenings? If so, how was it that Klington's illusion was the same as his?

He made out a line of huge white cliffs hanging inverted in the sky, at least fifty miles away. Rapidly they were falling straight toward the other cliffs below, which they so greatly resembled.

Parling was also conscious that the illumination, which until now had remained steady, was gradually fading What could this new development mean?

Were they to be plunged into darkness and crushed helplessly beneath countless tons of rock? Where was the rock falling from?

A sudden fantastic thought entered his tortured mind. It was almost too bizarre for utterance.

"Klington," gasped Parling, seizing him fiercely by the arm and pointing upward with the frenzy of a madman "It is as if—as if a colossal mirror were falling above our heads. What we are seeing is the reflection of the white ranges we have just passed through!"

CHAPTER III

Suspicion

INDEED, Klington readily imagined that one was the reflection of the other, so alike were they in every visible detail. All at once he sprang to life

"Come," he said, and turned Parling round "We have no time to lose. If the apparition is really falling from an immense height, it will take over an hour to reach the ground We required five hours to pierce the pass Going back the same way is foolhardy. The only way that lies open to us is directly across this red plain away from the mountains. That's our only hope of escape. We must get as far as possible from here before the catastrophe occurs! Come!"

Swiftly they dispensed with some of their leaden weights and began to spring across the red ooze in mighty fifty-yard leaps. The seeming utter impossibility of what they had witnessed had staggered their minds. All logical, connected thinking ceased. A dull apathy settled upon them, and only the motor centre of their brains kept their leg muscles in feverish activity.

Onward they progressed in Herculean strides. They did not even dare stop for meals, but ate as they ran

They did not speak. Only unpleasant, squelching sounds broke the silence. They reserved all their breath for running. Ever the light continued to fade, ever they approached the dark shadows of the farther side of the plain. But what was the use of their flight? Such a mass, crashing down from the skies, would shake the whole planet to its very foundations

But anything was better than inactivity.

To stand still and watch that awful doom approaching would have been inviting madness. Often Klington and Parling wondered if they were not already insane, undergoing illusions rivaling those of an opium dream.

Suddenly they were both flung on their faces by a frightful cracking noise interspersed with ear-splitting peals of thunder, as if Thor were smashing the ground in two with his mighty hammer. They were unable to do anything but cling to the vegetation and stare at the monstrosity in the heavens. The roar now was accompanied by a terrific blast of hot air that swept over them. Had the falling rock at last reached the ground?

They goggled in amazement. The white mountains only half a mile from the topmost peaks, were no longer accelerating. They were actually slowing down! Their speed now was reduced to no more than a few feet a second.

Then where had the roaring and the wind come from? The last vestige of reality left the scene. The lone human beings stared about with frightened eyes and failed to perceive the origin of the dreadful tumult. Faintly they saw a vague mass far away to the left. Shadowy outlines above in the skies indicated something huge like a canopy, as if supporting the suspended rocks.

The light, now reduced to a mere dim twilight, gave them no cheer. They had been saved for the moment by a miracle so incredible that their benumbed wits had not as yet even realized the situation.

AS suddenly as it had begun, the deafening din ceased. But the warm blast continued blowing without noise, and left the world once more a wilderness of silence. The men staggered to their feet and gaped around.

They were just within the region of dense shadow they had perceived before. Seeing that all immediate danger was apparently over, they decided to recuperate their fatigued bodies with sleep and food.

Parling was the first to awake. While his fellow-voyager slept on, he occupied himself in throwing away an empty oxygen tank and replacing it with a full one.

Klington was aroused from his deep sleep by a light touch on his shoulder. He opened his eyes, stared upward at Parling, and grunted interrogatively. Parling had unconsciously assumed the old familiar attitude. Legs stiffly apart like a statue, his outstretched arm pointed over Klington in the direction of the white mountain-chain.

"Look," he whispered.

Klington got up and turned around. The two simply stood and watched, absolutely incapable of further wonderment, while the new danger rapidly advanced.

A wall of some liquid, apparently water, reached at least a mile high. It was so long that it stretched out of sight on either hand. And it came bearing down upon them with the velocity of a tidal wave. With one accord they turned and fled into the darkness.

They found themselves going steeply downhill. It became so black that they had to use their torches. The artificial light saved them from countless mishaps as they speed through the gloom in gigantic leaps. Their velocity was now almost equal to that of the oncoming wave. But how long would it be before they tired and their doom overtook them?

They were now practically falling down the precipitous grade, and making good progress. But while the slope no doubt aided them, it also speeded the water behind them. The swishing and roaring of its passage had just become audible when the ground suddenly smoothed out to a gentler slope.

Gasping for breath, they raced on side by side. When one stumbled, the other fell back to help him up. After dozens of weary miles were covered in this manner, their overworked muscles forced them to slow down. Not so the waters, however, which inexorably swept on. The flood could no longer be seen, owing to the dense blackness. But their nearness was easily judged by the increasing noise they made. Dully Klington and Parling realized that their adventure was at an end. Their story would never reach the world.

Suddenly Klington had an inspiration.

"Parling," he sobbed almost incoherently, "Turn up the oxygen throttle all the way!"

NO sooner had they done so when renewed life flowed through their veins. They felt rejuvenated, intoxicated. Once more they struggled onward. But the roar of the waters was always present in their ears, like monstrous grasshoppers advancing inexorably.

The respite was brief, however. For a time it worked well, but the extra flow of the life-giving fluid used up their energy at an enormously increased rate. After a short interval of superhuman activity, they fell to the ground, utterly exhausted.

Nothing now could possibly save them. They lay groaning in the oozing vegetation, waiting hopelessly for the end. Gradually they grew aware of that regular booming sound emerging from the bowels of the earth. They had noticed before, but now its volume was greatly increased.

Abruptly the mighty swirl of waters was upon them. All wild hopes for help from the originators of the mysterious beating were engulfed in the lashing fury of the wave. Up, up, it swept them right to the top of its lofty crest.

Klington, feebly trying to float on the smoother upper surface, felt himself borne along irresistibly. His torch was still firmly grasped in his hand, as the drowning man is supposed to clutch the straw. The ray inadvertently fell upon Parling, a few feet away.

Klington could barely credit his senses. Surely the weird effect of the solitary gleam playing about in a sea of darkness, combined with the fatigue of his faculties, was deluding him. With an effort he swung the torch around until it again illuminated Parling. It was impossible! It couldn't be! Ordinary human beings could never perform the miracles of the Bible . . .

But that was exactly what the scientist was doing. Parling, who appeared quite as

startled as himself, was actually walking on the water! Klington's blood ran cold as he turned his attention to himself. He realized that so far he had not yet been submerged. In fact he was merely lying on the surface as naturally as one lies on a couch. He stood up and began to walk toward Parling.

Imagine the amazement of that incredible meeting! These two, who had never expected to see each other again in the flesh, had once more been saved in a miraculous fashion. . . .

They walked to each other, shook hands, and grinned in delighted astonishment! Then they noticed that the water gave way a little under their feet, but that the surface was not even broken. It was as if a tight, impenetrable skin was stretched over the entire seething liquid.

IT was comparatively quiet up here, so far above the noisy tumult where the water came in contact with the ground. Conversation was unrestricted. The inkling's of a great idea had come to Parling when first the wave swept him up in its embrace. Now he became wildly excited. He whooped with joy and slapped Klington on the shoulder. The philosopher fell flat, for it was a difficult task to keep one's feet on the smooth skin surface.

"I have it! I have it!" Parling cried, in tones suggestive of a man who has suddenly solved an almost insoluble problem.

"Have what?" demanded Klington, annoyed at his companion's unaccountable exuberance.

Parling calmed down somewhat, then spoke grandiloquently.

"With all your philosophy, you have no doubt been unable to see the explanation of all the mysterious occurrences which we have recently undergone."

Klington assented bewilderedly.

"Klington, it must be due to bad training in your youth. Your philosopher-masters have told you that everything is relative, and you believed them. But such is your mind that you are unable to apply it even in simple cases. Klington, it requires the mind of a mathematician to do that. My explanation, at once elementary and logical, embraces everything from the black forest to the flood which now carries us along! If it is true, it indicates another danger ahead, far more terrible than the ones we have yet experienced—"

Parling stopped for a moment and peered into the gloom ahead.

Before he could say another word, before the astonished Klington could utter a single question, the surface of the water tilted. It assumed an angle so steep that it was no longer possible to remain upright. Klington and Parling instantly sprawled on their backs and began glissading down to a fate that was, at least to Klington, unknown.

They had no time to remark upon this frightful disaster. It was as much as they could do to keep their feet foremost. But extinction was not yet to be theirs.

The water swept round a gradual curve to the left, ever steepening. But the Terrestrials, since they were not actually immersed in the fluid, did not partake of its friction. They careened on in a straight line, owing to their own inertia, in the direction of the tangent. They were crushed with staggering force against a rocky rough mass, the first elevated land they had encountered since leaving the albous mountains. It jutted up out of the water to a considerable height.

With the energy born of despair they clung with all their strength to the slight projections the island afforded. Klington with great difficulty managed to grab a narrow ledge and climb up. But in the process he dropped his flashlight, which was instantly swept away in the current.

Parling's torch, however, indicated his precarious position. The clever scientist had obtained a grip on the ledge but could not pull himself up. Klington carefully made his way along the ledge. He bent over and removed the torch from Parling's grasp. Placing it in a crevice so it shone upon Parling, Klington heaved him out.

A few feet farther on, the ledge abruptly terminated. They were obliged to walk along it in the other direction. Not far had they progressed when they were forced to stop. An impassable wall blocked the way. They stood helplessly flashing the torch around. Yet there was still a hope. The beam revealed no passage round the obstruction, but about twelve feet above their heads the ledge seemd to continue.

Klington, the lighter of the two, climbed upon Parling's shoulders. He was barely able to reach the upper ledge. Once he did, though, it was an easy mattar to help Parling up the rock-face. The new ledge sloped steeply upward, and the slipperiness and narrowness of the path made it extremely difficult to walk.

For an eternity they plodded onward in silence. They heard nothing but a disconcerting gurgling sound that became louder and louder as they mounted.

The path took a sherp turn to the left, following the contour of the island. The travelers, weary and hungry, found themselves on a wide platform surrounded by rock on three sides and blank space on the other.

Klington and Parling shuddered with horror. A flash of the light revealed a ghastly pit of unestimable depth into which the waters plunged in a vast whirlpool. That was the origin of the gurgling noise. If not for the timely intervention of the island, they would now be lost in those depths.

The scientist nodded.

"Just as I thought!" said Parling, gazing into the abyss.

CHAPTER IV

Revelation

WHEN the Terrestrials had made themselves as comfortable as possible on the rock-bound square and partaken of food, they slept for some six hours. Parling refused to say a word until he had rested. As for Klington, his mind was in a whirl at the

anticipated explanation that Parling had hinted at.

Did Parling really have the solution to all the peculiar phenomena they had seen? How could he explain the lack of horizon, the sensitive black holes, the interlacing regular furrows, the unchanging illumination? But the abrupt and orderly white mountains, the hideous denizens of the pass, the strange underground beating, were incomprehensible to Klington. Longingly he wanted an explanation of the plain where everything was red, the falling rocks which never reached the ground, and lastly this turbulent sea that had sprung from nowhere.

But were the hints Parling had thrown out merely the gibberings of a maniac?

When Klington awoke, he was agreeably surprised to find that the flashlight was now unnecessary. The natural illumination, though faint, was good enough to enable him to perceive nearby objects. He aroused Parling.

After they had eaten, he immediately demanded the explanation at which the scientist had hinted.

"It is really very simple," said Parling. "In fact, it is almost obvious, at least to a discerning intellect like mine."

KLINGTON was much too interested to parry, and Parling went on.

"The key to the mystery lies in this. We are not on a planet at all!"

An exclamation burst from Klington. Parling rose and stood on the edge, his back to the gulf, in his favorite emulation of the Rhodian Colossus. He was the triumphant man now.

"No," he said dramatically. "We are not upon a planet—but on the skin of a monstrous, Gargantuan animal! Is it not obvious? We landed on the lip of the beast. Those sensitive stems no doubt were analogous to Earthly hair or down. We traveled to one side of the lip. There was no horizon almost on every side because we were on the slope nearest the mouth. The ground curved upward all around until it was out of sight. You can understand that, at least.

"The mountains we encountered, Klington, were indisputably teeth! And I suppose the large, swift-footed organisms we met there can be likened to the bacteria in our own teeth, which cause decay if not removed by tooth-paste. Well, we journeyed between two of the teeth of the monster, and thus entered its mouth. Time and space both seem to be greater in this universe than in ours, for the heart-beats we heard were quite slow.

"The similarity between the creature and humanity is so great that the interior of its mouth is red, as we saw. The sea that swept us here is, of course, merely saliva. The cracking sound we heard during the gale must have been some tit-bit the monster was crunching at the other end of its mouth! We shall soon see it."

"But how do you explain the miracle of walking on the water?" interposed Klington excitedly.

"I don't quite understand that," said Parling slowly, as if unwilling to divulge any flaw in his theory.

THEY fell silent for a moment. Klington was reflecting deeply. Suddenly his face lit up.

"I've got it!" he cried. "It's quite obvious, and it's a strong corroboration of your idea."

It was now Parling's turn to be confused.

"Indeed?" he said.

"Yes," said Klington. "It was due to surface tension. Haven't you ever seen a microphotograph of a fly crawling on the surface of a stream? Surface tension, common to all fluids, gives the appearance of a tight elastic skin stretched over the water—just the effect we observed. Compared with this Brobdingnagian animal, we are much less than any insect. The phenomenon is not due to the large volume of liquid present—or else no boat on an ocean could ever sink on our Earth. But the molecules themselves composing the saliva are correspondingly bigger than Earthly molecules."

Parling was pleased at this support of his theory.

"The philosopher's mind," he said, "can lead on to fresh facts, once the mathematician has shown the way. The apparently falling rocks which caused us to depart in such a hurry, as I suppose you have guessed by now, were none other than the upper teeth of the monster."

Parling turned around and pointed to the tremendous hole below him.

"And this, Klington, is undoubtedly the creatures' throat. Think of it, man, think of it! It must be at least five hundred miles deep."

Swift and sure, on the heels of this statement, came death. The island which had stood them in such good stead, gave a sudden spasmodic twitch, as if revolting at the thought of these presumptuous mortals from another world.

With a terrible, despairing cry, Parling, who had been standing on the very edge, toppled over. His hands were madly clutching at empty space. He vanished into the boiling maelstrom!

Klington was flung against the hard side wall and knocked unconscious by the vicious shock.

When his senses revived, the light was as bright as day. No doubt the monster was again opening its mouth. For several minutes he lay dully, while slow realization came to him.

He had suffered the loss of his companion. He was now absolutely alone in a strange world, imprisoned in the jaws of a nightmare animal. . . .

How long he remained there he had no means of telling, for his watch had been stopped by the impact. Many times the island was shaken by spasms, but none so violent as the first. He kept as near to the inner wall as possible, in fear of sharing the ghastly fate of Parling.

Then came the dread moment when he fitted the last oxygen cylinder to the breathing tube, and still the waters had not subsided. He remembered Parling's haversack, which lay where the scientist had had his last sleep.

To his joy it contained a plentiful supply of oxygen tanks.

At that instant the loud roaring of the waters ceased. He went to the brink and looked over. The whirlpool was now reduced to a mere trickle. It was necessary to go at once before a second deluge appeared.

Klington fastened his haversack, replenishing his diminished supplies with those of Parling. Climbing down the narrow ledge, he jumped to the floor of the mouth. He had gone but half a mile up the slope toward the white barrier, far away in the distance, when a fresh surprise greeted him. The ground curved upward much steeper than he had observed before. It reached a height of several miles, and ran flat until it encountered the tops of the white mountains.

He could not imagine what had occurred. Then it came to him in a flash.

The monster had merely raised its tongue, the tip of which was now resting on its teeth!

It was no good climbing to the top of the teeth, so he made a detour to the left. In that direction, he thought, lay the nearest edge of the tongue.

After a journey of many miles, he came at last to the edge. He clambered down the rough side, and stood upon the mouth floor.

It was moving so quickly that he could just follow its motion. It was almost halfway between its former site and the nearest tooth. A faint hope surged in his breast. It was his only chance for life, for soon the last of the oxygen would be utilized.

If the motion continued in that direction, the ladder would shortly be close to the peak of the tooth. Instantly, for no time was to be lost, he flung away much of his provisions and all the leaden weights. Retaining only the remaining cylinders, he returned through the gap in huge leaps.

WITHOUT a pause he trekked alongside the tongue, until it was near enough to the ground to make the ascent practicable. Without daring to delay for meals, he climbed up the steep, difficult slope of the lower portion of the tongue. Eventually he arrived at the flatter upper portion.

Here the going was much facilitated, but he did not relax his efforts. By exercising his will-power to the utmost, he forced his tired limbs toward the tip of the tongue.

While down in the pass below, he had noted the tooth toward which the ladder was moving. He had counted the number of

He continued along the five-mile-wide channel between the cheek and the tongue until he came to the teeth.

In the pass between two of them, he encountered the usual microbelike creatures. At last he stood on the clear plain which alone separated him from the one link with Earth.

Klington raised a powerful pair of prismatic binoculars to his eyes. He scanned the forest of black stems for the white sheet which indicated the position of the ladder. It was nowhere to be seen!

For half an hour he searched, while a cold hand tightened its grip on his heart.

To his great surprise, his attention was attracted upward. With an unpleasant jolt, he perceived that some chance movement of the monster he had explored had caused the ladder to ascend to a height of five miles. It was much nearer than before. He could even make out the end of the rod beside the rope ladder and the sheet. What a terrible predicament he was in! Hope seemed lost as he gazed with hungry eyes at the precious connection to his world.

teeth that lay between it and the end of the row. With this to guide him, he hurried on. Hunger now was added to his fatigue.

Within five hundred yards of the tip, he paused and flung himself prostrate with a cry of despair. The tongue had been slowly contracting and arching upward. Now the tip was a good eight hundred yards from the opposite peak! As if in mockery, the ladder dangled above the tooth, just within reach of a vertical jump! But by the time it passed over the tongue, it would be too high! Klington stood erect with sudden resolve. There was only one thing to do.

Casting away his haversack, he ran to the very tip. He flung himself bodily through the air in a mighty attempt to span the gap.

The feat was by no means impossible. But there was a large element of risk for a man in Klington's weakened state, despite the slight gravity. Up he rose to the top of the parabola, and then began to fall with a weirdly slow acceleration. His mind reeled at the thought of the terrible gulf twelve miles below him, but he determined not to look downward.

Presently his heart froze with horror. He realized that he could never attain the opposite side. His weary limbs had failed him at the last! He would fall short by about three yards! A small distance, but as good as infinity in his present condition.

He had but three seconds in which to consider the position before he passed below the level of the opposing brink. His subconscious mind, unknown to himself, was working with lightning rapidity.

Suddenly there flashed into his conscious mind two facts he had learned when a schoolboy. Projectiles have the maximum range when they leave the mouth of the gun at an angle of forty-five degrees to the horizontal, was the first. The second was the principle of the rocket—reaction.

The heaviest object he had, which could be detached in a moment, was the single remaining oxygen cylinder. It was heavy because it was nearly full of liquid oxygen. Hastily he unfastened it and hurled it with all his strength, forty-five degrees downward, away from the crest of the tooth.

THE impetus was not great, for his mass was much more than that of the cylinder. But, owing again to the slight gravity, it was enough.

Klington's straining fingers were brought just within reach of the edge. He swung himself on the flat surface.

Staggering to his feet, he looked around for the ladder, and jumped. The lack of oxygen was already telling. He fell to the tooth. His lungs were clamouring for the fluid.

He gathered himself together and leaped again.

Everything was getting black. He couldn't have jumped far. He could never reach it . . .

His hand grasped the lowest rung! He was saved!

Slowly, wearily, gasping for breath, Klington painfully managed to drag his body up the ladder.

He ascended into the kindly world of men.

Thrills in SCIENCE

Thumbnail Sketches of Great Men and Achievements

By MORT WEISINGER

THE MYSTERY MAN OF SCIENCE

ORFFYREUS, the Saxon, pointed to the huge spinning wheel at his left. "Behold, gentlemen," he told the distinguished audience before him, "my masterpiece!"

The group of silent visitors stared bewilderedly at the metal wheel, six feet in diameter, which kept rotating on a fastened axle at a speed of about fifty revolutions per minute.

Orffyreus paced up and down the room, nervous, his eyes agleam with excitement

"Observe, gentlemen," he went on. "My wheel spins regularly, evenly. It has been spinning so for the past five minutes It will continue so for the next hour, the next day, tha next year—for all eternity!"

One of the group of observers in Orffyreus' simple laboratory, bolder than the rest, walked over to the mysteriously spinning wheel. He inspected its gears, its supports. Finally ha shook his head in wonderment.

"I am puzzled," he announced to the others. "As sure as my name is Sir Isaac Nawton I would hava declared such a miraculoua device impossible. Yet here it is, before my very eyes, a mechanical invention that whirls ahont of its own volition. What strange power makes your wheel spin so, Orffyreus?"

Sir Isaac Newton

"It is as I have told the architeet to the Emperor of Austria," Orffyreus said enigmatically. "I have harnessed the powers of perpetual motion!"

Perpetual motion! Even in the year 1712 the quest for this Holy Grail of science seemed aa imposable as the finding of the alchemist's stone, or the attainment of the elixir of life. And now here was this man Orffyreus, a native of Zitau, Saxony, telling the world that he had accomplished the impossible!

"We can't believe our eyes," declared a noted savant in the room, sent along with the others to examine the alleged wonders of Orffyreus' wheel. "'Tis the magic of a charlatan." He turned to the others. "This man is no acientist. He is a trickster, one who would dupe ua. Have we seen the inner casings of his wheel? Mayhaps the power that turns the wheel is locked therein. Perpetual motion is impossibla Nothing goes on forever. The longest river dries up Yeah, even the Sun will some day be a dead, lightless aphera!"

Orffyreus answered calmly, atriving to control his temper.

"When a fool cannot understand the workinga of the wise, he makes ridicule. Well, mock me But my wheel turna, by a power all its own And it will be turning long after you have been interred in your grave, and worms have eaten you!"

Sir Isaac Newton, the most brilliant scientist of the day, interrupted:

"Tell me, Orffyreus," he said, "how functions your device? How do you account for the law of conservation of energy? The anergy given by the revolving of your wheel ia converted into heat by friction. Why doea not this friction stop your wheel?"

"That is *my* secret," stormed the unknown inventor. "I have made my claims Here is a wheel that spins before your eyes The wheel does not touch the ground. It is supported by an axle suspended by a rod from the ceiling It receives no external aid. It has been apinning for half an hour already . . . it will continue to spin for centuries. If *your* science cannot explain *my* feat, that is not my concern."

"The casings!" reminded the notabla who

had heckled Orffyreus before. "What of them? Break the seal. Show us! There lies your secret." A cunning gleam illuminated the notable's eyes. "A spring is sealed therein. That's it—I'll wager ten pounds a tiny, coiled spring controls your wheel!"

Orffyreus picked up an iron hammer from his work-bench. He strode over to the rotating, purring wheel. With one swift blow he shattered the metal casings surrounding the hub of the wheel. The casings fell to the floor in fragments, exposing—nothing. The wheel hummed on, speeding in its eternal cycle.

Sir Isaac Newton shook his head. Like others before him who had come to study this curious device, he was baffled. Orffyreus' model of a perpetual motion machine defied all known laws of science. Yet it did exist. That was the devil of it. One could argue until he was blue in the face that it was impossible. But there it was, a cold fact. How can you argue against facts?

"He is a knave, a swindler!" cried the members of the scientific committee in the room. "He has bartered with the devil; this machine is Satan's own magic. No righteous mortal man could leash the forces of eternity!"

And so it went for poor Orffyreus. Dignitaries came to scorn his invention, not to accept it. Because they couldn't understand, he was a faker. Many men had tested his machine; his claims were always upheld. Yet they went away in disbelief. Seeing was not believing. Even Sir Isaac Newton was unconvinced, although he had been impressed.

Orffyreus picked up his hammer. The rage that he had been trying to suppress all during the interview finally gave vent. He went over to his spinning wheel, smashed at the hub, rained stroke after stroke at the whole apparatus until the machine had stopped, became a shattered, jagged heap of useless metal. Orffyreus had destroyed the first wheel to illustrate the miracle of perpetual motion.

Whatever Orffyreus' secret was, it died with the inventor, who smashed his model in fury as a protest against the bigoted scepticism of his critics. Science has not committed itself as to a verdict regarding this strange feat. Perhaps, they suggest, it was done through the power of magnetism, something Orffyreus might have discovered unknown to the others. And, if we feel inclined to scoff, science warns us, "Let us remember that the 'impossibilities' of one age are eventually the proved certainties of another!

Did Orffyreus really solve the secret of perpetual motion? No one will ever know. That will be time's perpetual secret!

THE UNFINISHED EXPERIMENT

ANTOINE LAURENT LAVOISIER smiled wanly. It was strange, the way he felt. Any other person in his place would be trembling, terrified. Yet he felt extremely at ease. He was calm, at peace with the world. Only one strong emotion flooded his being—curiosity. A thousand devils of curiosity pitchforked at his inner mind. They had been gnawing away at his soul for days, and there was nothing he could do about it.

It was tough, Lavoisier told himself. Sure, if he had had the opportunity to continue his experiment, he would have obtained the answer to the problem that was haunting him. But now he would never complete his experiment. Death was upsetting the chemical balance. For Antoine Lavoisier was a doomed man.

It was all so unreal, so unbelievable. A month ago he had been happily at work in his laboratory, one of the most brilliant chemists in France. Leading scientific associations showered him with honors. Famous scientists submitted papers to him, begging his criticisms. And now—Death was but minutes off.

Well, he didn't mind dying. Everyone had to die at some time or another. But he would like to have written "Finis" to his last experiment. Lavoisier shut his eyes, let his memory drift him back one month. He had been working in his laboratory with Seguin, his associate. He remembered. . . .

Antoine Lavoisier regarded the man sitting on a chair in the laboratory. The man was hermetically enclosed in a varnished black silk bag, a bag rendered absolutely airtight except for a narrow slit to enable breathing.

Lavoisier laughed aloud.

"You certainly look funny, Seguin," he said jovially. "You'd win first prize at a masquerade in your costume. Everyone would think you were an executioner."

Seguin, the black silk cloak sheathing his frame, replied through the small orifice that had been cut away near his mouth:

"Hurry up with the experiment, Antoine. I feel warm inside this outfit."

"Well, keep your mouth shut, then," Lavoisier told his assistant. Saying so, the chemist carefully cemented the edges of the slit in the top of the silk bag around the man's mouth with a mixture of pitch and turpentine.

"Voici!" he exclaimed as he finished. "Now we are ready. You see, *mon ami*, everything emitted by your body will now be retained in the silk bag. It cannot escape . . . the bag is airtight. The only air that will escape from your body is that which is exhaled from your lungs while you breathe. You will breathe this respired air into several bottles. Later, I will analyze their contents. Whatever escapes from your body in the way of perspiration will remain sealed in the silken covering."

Lavoisier hummed softly to himself as he went about preparing for this experiment.

He was investigating, for the first time, the processes of respiration and perspiration of the human body.

Lavoisier felt very satisfied with himself. This was to be one of the most accurate experiments he had ever performed. The weight of Seguin, the silk bag, the inhaled air, and the respired air, and determinations of the gain in weight of the bag and loss in weight of his associate, were made on the most sensitive balances in all the world. His instruments would announce perfect results.

But Antoine Lavoisier, who, by his remarkable contributions to the field of chemistry, had laid the cornerstone of that science, was destined never to read the results of this experiment. The man who had established the law of the conservation of mass, the man who had given chemistry a rational nomenclature, was suddenly interrupted in the middle of his experiment. The door of his laboratory burst open, and a noisy squad of soldiers rushed in.

One of the men strode over to the seated Seguin, ripped the silk off his body. Another man, a pompous, insolent individual, obviously the leader, strode over to the bewildered scientist and read from a document:

"I, Marat, member of the National Assembly and Friend of the People, charge you with treason against the people of France. On the night of July Twelfth, you, Antoine Lavoisier, aided in the transferring of gunpowder from the Arsenal to the Bastille. You will be judged by the Revolutionary Tribunal."

Suddenly, Lavoisier understood. This was Paris, 1794. The French Revolution was in full swing. The Reign of Terror, was sweeping the country, and thousands were being sent to their death. And Marat was finally obtaining his revenge.

For Marat and Lavoisier were enemies. Years before, when Marat had attempted to gain election to the Academy of Science, Lavoisier had exposed him as a very poor chemist. Evidently, Marat had never forgotten.

"Why should Lavoisier enjoy an income of forty thousand livres annually?" Marat had pointed out to the hysterical underprivileged classes. "We don't need any scientists in the Republic."

Marat had used other persuasive arguments. He showed that Lavoisier had once been a tax-collector, that he was a former secretary to the King. Spurious charges were heaped one atop the other—and Lavoisier, immortal man of science, was arrested.

Yes, Lavoisier understood now all too well the revenge Marat had reaped. As the soldiers placed him under arrest and pushed him toward the door, Lavoisier shook them off momentarily, stood still a moment. His eyes wandered around the laboratory . . . ranged from the sensitive balances to the various flasks and retorts. Something told him that he would never work with this apparatus again, never set foot in the laboratory . . . never complete his experiment.

Lavoisier was right. In May, 1794, in spite of petitions from many of his influen-

Anton Laurent Lavoisier

tial friends, who reminded the Court of the greatness of this man of science, he was sentenced to death . . .

* * *

Lavoisier opened his eyes, to look into the masked eyes of the executioner. He smiled grimly. The black-clad, masked executioner did look like Seguin, when he had been wearing the black silk bag.

The executioner nodded shortly. The great mob of frenzied spectators went quiet, out of respect for this great scientist. Bravely, head erect, Lavoisier walked over to the guillotine, placed his head under the knife.

A brief pause, then a roll of drums. The executioner released the blade, and the shining knife flashed down. The decapitated head of Lavoisier fell into the insatiable basket below the death-machine.

And below, in the audience, the eminent mathematician, Lagrange, shuddered. He turned to a companion and said softly:

"This is science's darkest moment. It took but a moment to cut off that head, though a hundred years perhaps will be required to produce another like it!"

Death had completed Lavoisier's experiment.

THE BIRTH OF AN ELEMENT

IF Professor Henri Becquerel had not placed a piece of uranium ore upon a sensitized photographic plate. . . . . If Becquerel had not observed that certain changes occurred on that plate. . . . If you take away the thrilling moment when Becquerel made his startling observation—then you might just as well shove science back more than a decade!

Professor Becquerel was an average scientist. He liked his work, and he did it well. He was an instructor at the Ecole Polytech-

nique, in Paris, and he was popular with his students and the faculty.

Becquerel had some ideas about science, particularly in regard to physics, which was his delight. He believed that every problem could be solved through the application of certain fundamental rules.

First, there was cause and effect. Everything that happened just didn't happen. It happened only because of something else, some motivating factor. If a scientist saw what happened, but couldn't explain why, then it was his task to provide the answer.

Secondly, Becquerel believed in the law of trial and error. To obtain the answer to a scientific riddle, you couldn't just pluck the solution out of thin air. You had to consider various theories, make many tests—thousands, if necessary. Trial and error. Miss, miss, until you scored a bull's-eye. That wasn't luck. That was pure scientific experimentation.

Bear these two things in mind. For that was why Henri Becquerel whistled loudly in amazement one morning when he entered his laboratory and happened to glance at a photographic plate lying on a table in his dark-room.

The night before, Becquerel had been working with a sample of uranium ore.

"I want to find out whether phosphorescent substances, such as uranium, give off X-rays," he had told an assistant. Later in the day, when Becquerel had finished his experiments for the afternoon, he had placed the piece of uranium ore upon a sensitized photographic plate in his dark-room. The plate, oddly enough, was covered with black paper.

Now, mind you, Becquerel didn't place the ore on the plate by any design. He could just as easily have put it on a shelf, or inside a cabinet. He merely placed the ore on the plate because it was within reach. If he hadn't placed the ore there, this story would never have been written. And science would have lost one of its most amazing short-cuts to progress.

And now, the morning after, Becquerel picked up the uranium ore, ready to continue further experiments with it. His eyes bulged, then squinted in disbelief as he lifted the ore. For the plate under the black paper had changed!

Becquerel called for his assistant.

"Look," he told him. "This plate has been changed, as though some light had hit it. How is this possible? This is a dark-room. No light enters here. What changed the plate? Tell me, is this a prank of yours?"

The assistant shook his head in bafflement.

"I don't know anything about this, Professor," he said. "I don't see how any light could have reached the plate."

Now, as we said before, Becquerel knew there must be a reason for every effect. This was a strange effect indeed, and he would not rest until he learned its cause.

So Becquerel tried the experiment again. He tried it a dozen more times. And it worked, in every case. Always the phenomenon was repeated. Under the uranium ore, through the black paper, the plate was always changed, as though light had contacted it. If he used a large piece of ore, the light area was correspondingly large. If he used a small piece, it was tiny.

Becquerel's scientific training told him the answer. There was something in the uranium that caused the plate to change. What, he didn't know. Was there a strange salt in the uranium that produced this uncanny effect? He couldn't say.

Next, Becquerel tested the chief ore of uranium, pitchblende, a mineral which came from northern Bohemia. This was a curious rock; it mystified the scientist. For, instead of radiating a photographic effect proportional to the amount of uranium present, this ore was much more powerful than its uranium content could account for.

Becquerel's next observation was obvious.

"There must be," he noted, "another element with power to affect a photographic plate many times greater than uranium itself."

Becquerel was a busy man. He couldn't take the time for the research involved to trace this mystery down. He would have to pass the job on to some colleague. Someone who wouldn't give up until the answer was achieved.

Ah, he had the perfect person! Someone with whom he had worked before, a tireless, energetic worker. Someone who had the dexterity and enthusiasm of a trained and gifted experimenter. That person was a girl.

Yes, Henri Becquerel had chosen the right person, indeed. The girl he had selected to work with the pitchblende ore was Marie Curie! And the element she later isolated from the pitchblende, the element responsible for the effects on the photographic plate was—radium!

SCIENCE QUESTION BOX

FISH THAT CHANGE COLOR

Editor, SCIENCE QUESTION BOX:

Are there any organisms known to zoologists, besides chameleons, which can change color?—D. F., Las Vegas, New Mexico.

The common catfish can change its color like a chameleon, but much more slowly. It requires from one to two days to pass through its range from coal-black to pale greenish yellow.

It appears that it is all a matter of glandular reactions, stimulated by light reflected from the fish's background to its eyes or its skin. When light falls upon the skin, its effect is carried to the pituitary gland, which discharges a substance called intermedin. This is carried by the blood to the pigment cells and causes the fish to become dark.

When light from a dark surface enters the fish's eye, certain nerve fibers ending in the skin act more or less as glands, secreting a substance which also acts on the pigment-cells, causing darkening. Light reflected from a white surface has an opposite effect, producing a change toward light color. The substance causing the lightening seems to be adrenalin.—Ed.

ROTATION OF THE EARTH

Editor, SCIENCE QUESTION BOX:

What proof have we that the Earth rotates on its axis, besides the phenomenon of day and night?—C. W., Dallas, Texas.

The Earth's rotation is best demonstrated by the Foucault pendulum. In 1851, Jean Bernard Leon Foucault, French physicist, suspended a heavy iron globe from the dome of the Pantheon at Paris. The slender wire over 200 feet long, was free to swing equally in any direction.

When put in motion the pendulum would swing for several hours unaffected by its surroundings. Had such a device been erected at the North or South Poles of the Earth the ground below the pendulum bob would have swung around completely in 24 hours. Since we are on that ground our impression would have been that the pendulum had changed the direction of its swing.

At the equator there would have been no motion, and at intermediate points a proportional movement. That is exactly what Foucault noted at Paris and what is today demonstrated in several museums. The gyroscope too can be used to demonstrate this rotation.—Ed.

DID THE MOON BELONG TO US?

Editor, SCIENCE QUESTION BOX:

I've heard it said that the Moon was once a part of the Earth. Is this just idle speculation, or is there a basis for such a hypothesis?—L. N., New York, N.Y.

The Moon may once have been part of South America! Thousands of small glassy objects, called "tektites," discovered on the southwestern shores of the Pacific Ocean are important evidence that the Moon was once a part of the Earth. That theory was recently advanced by Dr. Carl W. Rufus of the University of Michigan astronomy department.

Scientists have known of these tektites for more than a century, but there has never been a plausible explanation given for their origin.

Dr. Rufus' explanation of the phenomena is based largely upon the general "fission" theory of the origin of the Moon, developed by Sir George Darwin, and which says that the Pacific Ocean is a scar on the Earth—created when the Moon was torn away 10,000 years ago by a powerful tidal force.

Some of the loose matter which was not pulled away with the Moon did not fall back immediately to the Earth, Dr. Rufus says, but rather continued to revolve out in space for some time. These particles, he believes, were similar in composition to the matter which is contained in Saturn's Rings today, and are the same glassy "tektites" found in the Pacific area.

The composition of the primitive Earth at the time of the Moon's fission is not known today, but it is generally believed that the rupture occurred while the Earth was beginning to solidify. According to Dr. Rufus' theory, the Earth was made up of an upper layer of hard granite, with a lower layer of glassy basalt beneath the granite.

"When the fission occurred," the astronomer continues, "it seems very probable that the mass of the Moon stripped the Pacific area of its granite layer and probably lifted some of the material from the glassy layer. The glassy part being deepest, it was the last to leave Earth and would therefore constitute the material which formed the fragments."

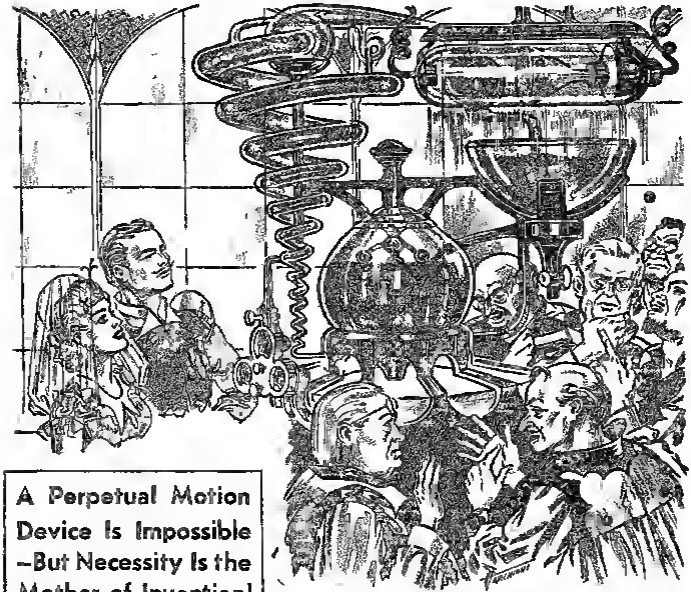
These particles were drawn into the Earth's atmosphere at speeds sufficient to produce the typical forms which are characteristic of tektites today.—Ed.

In this department the editors of STARTLING STORIES will endeavor to answer your questions on modern scientific facts. Please do not submit more than three questions in your letter. As many questions as possible will be answered here, but the editors cannot undertake any personal correspondence. Naturally, questions of general interest will be given the preference. Address your questions to SCIENCE QUESTION BOX, STARTLING STORIES, 22 West 48th Street, New York City.

The Machine That Had No Flaws

By RAY CUMMINGS

Author of "The Girl in the Golden Atom," "Ice Over America," etc.



The judges went back to their excited clucking and chattering

A Perpetual Motion Device Is Impossible—But Necessity Is the Mother of Invention!

KING ZARF was in a quandary because of his daughter. She was outside now, with still another young man. Through the open doorway of Zarf's softly illuminated palace room, the tones of the young man's murmuring voice came floating in from the shimmering moonlit terrace.

"Teena, dear, you are so beautiful. Flinging back a trillion star-glints, the depths of space remind me of thine eyes."

"Oh, Alfredo, you say such pretty things!"

King Zarf frowned. He shuddered so uncontrollably that his ample abdomen shook visibly beneath his gold-cloth tunic and the broad gold-mesh belt. He pushed a button on the table edge beside him. The door slid closed instantly, and effectively cutting off the voices. Then he shifted his chair and stared moodily through the oval palace window. Down the palm-clad declivity he gazed. There he saw the broad sea, shining in the white light of the moon and the stars. The isles of Greece, his nearest neighbor, peered just above the western horizon.

But King Zarf was in no mood for the beauties of Nature. The problem of Teena had to be solved. At eighteen, her luscious beauty fully matured, she was ripe for marriage. Zarf couldn't deny it, though he didn't want her married. Since her mother's death, who had ever been able to run the palace household the way Teena did? Who understood the little things that made him comfortable as well as Teena? Who else would ever learn how to put just that superb finishing touch to the chef's cookery? What would life be without that finishing touch? Nothing. Nothing at all.

It was a dilemma, but it was not only Teena herself. A princess of Albara must obey her father's commands. It was easy to claim that a suitable prince-consort had yet to appear. But Zarf's six million subjects were demanding an heir—a male heir. They were demanding it so furiously that the king's counselors, especially the aged Poppulos, were advising Zarf to let Teena marry.

Albara, last of Earth's little kingdoms, considered the crown a symbol for all the world to revere. Aloof from all modern entanglements of the three great World Federations, its palm-clad hills and blue-green waters were still peaceful, beautiful, old-fashioned. The bustle of modern civilization seldom reached here. Great stratosphere liners winged high overhead, mere tiny dots. But they never landed save when emergency brought them down to Zarf's small but complete airport.

Moodily the brooding Zarf stared through his ornate window. How could he stop the pressure which would deprive him of Teena, if only for another few years. Like Falstaff, so often smiling, he sprawled in his great chair, glum with meditation.

SUDDENLY the idea came to him. He thumped the table with his fat fist. He had found the way out. He could save his face, keep Teena, yet seem willing to give her up. The idea was novel to the modern world, though old-fashioned and completely in the tradition of beautiful Albara and its jolly King Zarf.

All his six million subjects would recognize its romantic quality at once. But that was only half of his idea. He could bring in a touch of modern science that would convince his subjects of his concern for Albara's welfare. He knew how inferior his subjects felt about science. Albara had never made a single discovery in science.

But imagine their enthusiasm now! Teena's beauty was to inspire scientific research. Apparently Albara would get its prince-consort, and at the same time gain scientific recognition. . . .

The idea was indeed an inspiration from heaven. Zarf's jolly moon-face was wreathed in smiles. His triple chins bobbed as he chuckled. Then he pressed a buzzer to summon one of his attendants.

"Bring me wine," he commanded. "Chandon Nineteen-forty-five is none too good today. I'll want two glasses, Marko. Have the chef prepare some of the melted cheese rarebit. For two, Marko. My usual portion, and some for the Princess Teena."

"Yes, Your Highness."

"And tell my daughter to send that young man home. She will dine with her father."

It surprised Teena, naturally. Quietly she brought his slippers and his pipe. She settled him in his great chair with just the right cushion behind his head. Noiselessly she served him his four pieces of toast, the rarebit, and poured his wine.

He watched her admiringly. He was her father, but he knew she was incredibly lovely. His eyes went soft as he gazed at her wavy mass of black hair, her patrician little face with its lustrous dark eyes and luscious red lips.

"Good news for me, Father?" she murmured at last.

"Oh, very good, Teena. Very good indeed." He removed the smile from his face, summoned a judicial frown. "I have been wondering whether you are right. I think you are old enough to have a husband."

"Oh, Father dear!"

"Who was that young man out there tonight?"

"Alfredo," she said excitedly. "Alfredo D'costa. You must have heard of him. His father, and his father's father, his whole family has been prominent here in Tyron. I'll have him in

tomorrow, to meet you personally—"

His gesture waved it away.

"We shall pick you a suitable husband."

"We?"

He let himself smile just a little.

"I mean to say, Teena, we shall let him pick himself. I will not have an ordinary man for a son-in-law. He must be a man of accomplishment, a man all would be proud of. He must have the welfare of our great Albara firmly rooted in his heart. A man of scientific achievement—" Zarf memorized his words as he spoke. The poor Albarans, self-conscious of their lack of discoveries, would love this. "His great research should make all the world realize Albara's scientific qualities."

"But, Father, I don't understand."

"You will, Teena." Zarf sat up abruptly. The cushion fell from behind his head and Teena hastened to readjust it. "We are going to have a contest," he said. "A scientific contest. I will award my daughter's hand to any man who can win it."

DESPITE her alarmed puzzlement, Teena's dark eyes twinkled.

"Father dear, you have been reading the 'Arabian Nights' again."

"Well, what if I have?" he retorted. "One can learn a lot about life from those old tales. Don't be selfish, Teena. Our people must lose their sense of scientific inferiority. Of course there will be world-wide publicity for Albara. But the main thing is that Albarans will appreciate the romanticism."

He could see that she was eyeing him narrowly. He made his judicial frown deepen.

"In a nutshell, child," he said with sudden briskness, "I am going to announce that the man who marries you must raise the scientific prestige of Albara so that all the world will applaud us. To win this contest, with you for its prize—"

"What does he have to do?" she asked suspiciously.

"He will have to be the discoverer of perpetual motion," King Zarf said flatly. "Now there is a discovery worthy of Albara's princess! The man who does it, we will acclaim—"

"But, Father. Perpetual motion has been proved to be impossible."

"Nothing is impossible, Teena. I forbid you to say a thing like that. Impossible, indeed! Would you have said that in Nineteen-hundred, if I had demanded that he show us how to fling voices through the air with the speed of light? To science, nothing is impossible."

Teena stopped listening. She was thinking of Alfredo. . . .

Whatever Teena's dismay at her father's shrewd scheme, the young and handsome Alfredo D'costs more than matched it. She told him about it the next night, when they sat again on the softly moonlit terrace of the palace.

"Perpetual motion!" the young man exclaimed bitterly. "Is that all I have to find to win you? He knows perpetual motion is scientifically impossible. Why, that old buzzard is doing what they used to do in the dark ages—give you a contest that you can't win."

She nodded, but she wasn't perturbed now. The wily King Zarf had fathered a girl as shrewd as himself. He should have been the first to suspect that possibility. She drew Alfredo closer, and put her slim, jeweled hand on his shoulder.

"You will win it, Alfredo," she whispered confidently. "I had a talk with old Poppulos today. He will be chief of the Board of Judges that Father will appoint to decide the contest."

"What if he is?" Alfredo asked defeatedly. "How can that help us?"

Princess Teena blushed slightly.

"He agrees that Albara needs an heir. So I told him about you. He thinks you would be suitable."

"He does? Well, that's nice of him."

"So I fixed it," she said. "We discussed it fully."

"The—the heir?"

"Oh, Alfredo dear, don't be silly. We discussed perpetual motion. Poppulos says that every machine submitted will, of course, seem to work. For hundreds of years machines like that have been made. But they all have flaws. In this case, the duty of the judges will be to find the flaws and point them out. So all you have to do—"

"Is to build a machine without flaws," he broke in savagely. "All I have to do is discover perpetual motion. You seem

to think that's pretty easy. For hundreds of years, every nation has had thousands of fools who went crazy trying to do that. And all I have to do is succeed where geniuses failed."

"Build a machine," she continued, ignoring his interruption, "with flaws in it, of course. Naturally you can't make a perfect machine. But hide its flaws reasonably well. Poppulos and the other judges will fail to find them—in your machine. You'll be declared the winner. You'll get the prize, I'll have the husband I want, Albara will be famous—and everybody will be happy!"

"But why should they fail to find the flaws?" he asked in bewilderment.

She put his arm around her waist and snuggled against him.

"You are silly, aren't you? A woman's smile and money can do almost anything. Of course I have to promise to do everything I can for the advancement of the judges when I am queen. Also, every Albaran—and Poppulos most of all—knows that the crown must have an heir—a male heir."

FROM his seat at the enormous banquet table, young Alfredo surveyed his fellow contestants. He shook his head disgustedly. King Zarf had plainly not cared a bit about the physical appearance of his daughter's potential husband. Every Albaran with any sort of scientific background—from garage mechanic to physics instructor—had been summoned to the palace to hear the rules of the spectacular contest.

Alfredo saw Teena look apprehensively at the pimply youths, the terrified stammerers, the portly men with bald heads, the quavering dotards. In her silvery robe, she sat at the end of the table, her face white and horrified. At the other end, Zarf sprawled smugly in his huge chair, beaming at his guests.

"One of you," he said expansively, "is destined to become my son-in-law. These are the rules for the contest that will bring eternal fame to Albara and a beautiful princess to the winner. . . ."

Alfredo didn't listen. He was too busy pondering the problem of what his machine should look like.

It must be impressive, of course. How about little rolling balls winding down intricate passageways, rising in tiny elevators that could be powered by the force of the balls' descent? Alfredo discarded that thought. It had been done too often. Every school child knew friction would halt it within a few years, and the output would be less than the input. Why not have water dropping on bladed wheels that carry the water up so it can drop again? No, that was old stuff, too. . . .

Alfredo tried to return Teena's sudden, furtive smile, but he knew how weak and wan his effort was. He felt tense and worried. Teena thought she had fixed everything. But what would happen if she hadn't? What if something went wrong? The judges could change their minds at the last moment and refuse to be bribed. That was bad enough to make him shudder. The next thought made sweat break through his skin.

Suppose one of his rivals actually did discover perpetual motion!

Frightenedly he stared at the pimply youths, the portly gentlemen, the trembling dotards. He knew their appearances had nothing to do with their minds. Few geniuses of the past had been glamour boys. Some had been at their greatest when they were practically children, the others well on in years. . . .

Alfredo was not the tensest man in that vast banquet hall as King Zarf continued explaining the rules of the contest. All the men glanced hopefully at Princess Teena. She had done her best to appear her plainest, but she couldn't hide her luscious beauty.

Sunlight slanted goldenly through the tall leaded windows. In the heavy summer air, the light fell in imposing cathedral shafts. On the table before Zarf stood a goblet of wine, which the sunlight pierced and made a gorgeous amber color.

For some reason that caught and held Alfredo's eye, he wondered worriedly. It may have been the curving glass of the goblet, shining brilliantly in the light. Whatever it was, the amber wine seemed queerly magnified in one patch, where tiny motes shifted and danced.

"The Brownian movement," he thought idly. "The eternal dance of the molecules. . . ."

He almost leaped to his feet. Instead, he gulped and held his breath, looking around the room in fear. Suppose somebody else there had guessed his secret!

CLOUDLESS and bright dawned the day of the contest. But by late afternoon the sky turned even brighter blue, or perhaps it was because of the contrasting white clouds that had suddenly appeared. The sun was a flattened red ball dropping into the Western Sea, where the green isles of Greece peered just over the horizon.

Abruptly the electric sirens wailed. The judges were assembling in the plaza before the palace. The favored aristocracy crowded the newly constructed stands. In the center of the grandstand, King Zarf sprawled in his box. He was resplendent in gold-cloth robes, with Teena, glorious in silver, sitting beside him. Facing them across the aisle, behind a long table, the six austere judges sat in a row. They frowned with the proper air of authority.

Electric amplifiers bawled the names of the contestants, who came out one by one with their competing machines. Overhead, the droning planes circled and dipped in salute. The crowd cheered, waved flags and then fell into hushes of expectancy.

"Manuel Palszino," the amplifier shouted. And a skinny giant dragged out a weird tangle of wires and tubing, which he demonstrated amid intent silence. When he left the field, the loudspeaker yelled again.

An old man named Marquand Georges Polikos stumbled uncertainly to his gigantic machine, which did practically nothing. The crowd watched in puzzlement as he went back.

"Alfredo D'costa!"

No one could know how Teena's heart jumped to her throat when she saw the coming heir to the Crown of Albara march across the plaza. Nobody noticed that all the judges leaned forward, frowning even more judicially at the pale young man who stood before them.

All the perpetual motion machines were lined up in a row now. The judges walked from one to the other, frowning speculatively at some, passing up others with a single glance.

Most of them were rehashes of the ancient fallacies. By their hugeness and intricacy, they tried to disguise such immutable laws as the fact that energy lost by friction can never be replaced, or that water cannot run uphill without losing, bit by bit, its original kinetic energy.

The flawless machine had never existed. It never could exist. The learned judges had no trouble pointing out the errors of almost all the machines. A few had been so cleverly constructed that sharp peering, measuring and gauging had to discover those flaws.

One by one the aspirants for Teena's hand slunk away in disgrace. But they should have known that defeat was inevitable. The Universe is not perfect. Even the most rigid law has its exceptions. Therefore why should man be able to construct a flawless machine?

But the crowd watched everything tensely. Princess Teena clenched her little fists while her heart thumped wildly. Only one person in that throng thought at all of food. With a lap-board across the arms of his throne, King Zarf ate his meal with gusto, washing it down with goblets of the finest wines. He had no reason for not eating. Everything was going well. Why shouldn't it? No one can do the impossible. . . .

ZARF was getting bored, though. When he finished his meal, there was only one contraption left on the plaza. All the others had been removed, probably to be thrown away by their disgraced inventors. Only for the sake of appearances did the king watch the judges operate that last machine, and his lack of interest was well concealed.

The final invention was the smallest of the lot, merely transparent tubes filled with circulating amber fluid. Starting in a large, illuminated goblet, where the liquid was apparently quiescent, there seemed to be an endless sequence of amber-filled tubes. Perhaps motes were swimming eccentrically through it. But no one could see that without being quite close.

Starting from the gohlet, the fluid went through a tuhe as fine aa a hair. At that point it seemed endowed with a slight forward movement. But it did not flow uphill nor downhill. The tiny forward current was on an exact level.

But slowly the tuhe widened. Inetead of heing less swift in that wider space, the current increased its speed. Where the winding, widening tube grew as large as a man's arm, it surged and lashed violently ahead. From there it spumed through a dynamo. The rotating shaft made a weird light epring up and leap through prisms, then spray the gohlet with a vivid spectrum.

Beyond the turhine, the liquid again lay motionless, in a flat, shallow, unlighted pool. But at the end of the pool it filtered through a needle-valve and started the cycle once more.

Drawing at the mouthpiece of his ornate pipe, King Zarf gazed with vague interest at the strange contraption, over which the judges were arguing, peering and measuring. Whose invention was it? Zarf turned to the contestants' row of seats. Only one man sat there—pale and worried, chewing his fingernails nervously. Zarf recognized him as young Alfredo D'costa, and that made him feel even more confident. Until then he had felt a slight tremor of fear hecause of the judges' lengthy discussion. How could a young dandy like D'costa discover perpetual motion? It was imposehle.

Suddenly old Poppulos broke away from the huddle of excited judges. The sirens screamed and fell silent. Into the tense hush, Poppulos ahouted at the top of hie voice.

"Alfredo D'costa is the winner! He has discovered perpetual motion!"

Zarf gagged on the smoke, almost swallowed the mouthpiece as he leaped up.

"What!" he roared ahove the cheers of the crowd.

But nobody was paying any attention to him. There was too much noise, too many people were surging forward around Alfredo. Teena was leaning far over the hox rail and hugging the hewildered young man.

"It can't be!" Zarf howled. "It can't be!"

He sat down heavily, morbidly aware of his lost comforte. The cheering and the triumphant hustle and rush went on without him. . . .

TEENA closed the door of Poppulos' office hehind her. But even in the silence of the room, she lowered her voice when she smiled charmingly at the judgee who had gathered there after the conteat.

"I can't thank you enough," she said. "Here is your reward for a just decision."

But the judges were not listening to her. Frankly puzzled and gaping, they stood around the perpetual motion machine Alfredo D'costa had invented. Even when their princess spoke again to them, they went on peering and whiepering anxiously.

"Look here," one of them burst out. "There must he flaws in it. But they're so cleverly hidden that I don't eee them even now."

Scratching through his white wig, old Poppulos turned away, shrugging his thin shoulders. He caught sight of Teena and rushed over to her.

"Princese," he cried, when she held out the hag of money. He pushed it away decisively. "We have earned nothing from you. Our decision was ahsolutely honeet. Of course there are flaws in the machine, hut we confess that we cannot find them!"

Alfredo stepped out of a corner of the shadowed room.

"But there are no flaws, gentlemen," he stated. "That actually is a perpetual motion machine."

Smiles hroke out on the judge'e faces.

"Please," said old Poppulos humorously. "As Princess Teena's hetrothed, you command our respect, naturally. We can helieve that you are clever enough to trick us. In fact, we can't helieve anything else. We can't admit the possihility of perpetual motion. That is an ohvious impossihility."

"But it isn't," Alfredo replied insistently. "Haven't you ever heard of the Brownian Movement? A man named Robert Brown once looked at a shining fluid through a telescope. For some reason the tiny particles suspended in the liquid seemed to have a queer, persiatent motion of their own.

He thought they were living organisms, but it didn't take long to disprove that idea. When the kinetic theory of energy was developed, scientists understood why those particles danced around in the fluid. It was because of the thermal agitation of the suspending medium."

Teena had never seen her young suitor so authoritative before. He looked and sounded almost professorial as he lectured these baffled old men.

"The tiny particles," he continued, "were being bombarded on all sides by the high-speed molecules of the liquid. A smoke particle floating in air is bombarded in the same way. The resultant impulse is sometimes nearly zero, but sometimes not quite. Inequalities result in the irregular movement of the particle. So my problem was simple. With the prismatic light generated by the resultant power of the machine, I directed the bombardment so the particles would migrate only in one direction.

"That takes place in the illuminated goblet, the starting point. Then the migrating particles set up a tiny current in the threadlike emerging tube. From there on, Nature takes care of the rest. The bombarded molecule acts like a huge molecule with a determinable speed of thermal motion. It communicates that speed to the molecules of the fluid.

"The result is a current that gains proportionately in power as it progresses. All I had to do was supply the original coordination of the direction of bombardment. Too bad it isn't mathematically perfect. If it were, it could roll along, increasing progressively in power, until we'd have something like a dozen Victoria Falls at the end!"

IN the silence that followed the conclusion of his explanation, the judges turned helplessly to the machine again. When they looked back at Alfredo, they were grinning like men who knew they should be kicking themselves.

"Heh, heh!" Poppulos cackled in embarrassment. "The Brownian Movement—of course. I don't know how we ever overlooked that."

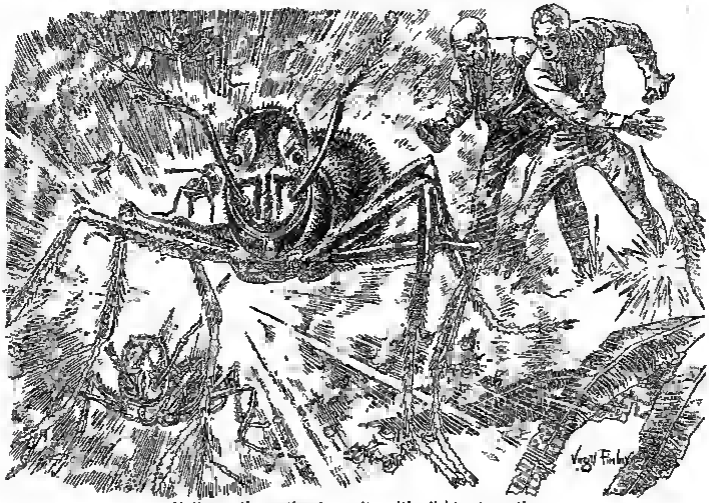
"Why not?" replied Alfredo diplomatically. "Robert Brown discovered the eccentrically migrating particles in Eighteen-twenty-seven. But it wasn't until Nineteen-five that it was given a mathematical analysis by Albert Einstein. He formulated his analysis by basing it on the law of the equi-partition of energy. But even then, and for so many years after, nobody realized that right under their noses was perpetual motion!"

The judges went back to their admiration of the clever machine. Clucking and chattering excitedly, they almost drowned Alfredo's whisper as he took Teena in his arms.

"Perpetual motion is probably a great discovery," he said softly. "But we've got perpetual emotion, haven't we, Teena? That's a lot more important. . . ."

STEINMETZ, Electrical Wizard, in THRILLS IN SCIENCE Next Issue

Social Insects With Uncanny Intelligence Organize for a Desperate Foray on Their Human Enemies



Halloran threw the dynamite with all his strength

KINGDOM OF THE ANTS

By GERALD BOWMAN

Author of "The Crime of Mr. Latta," "The Unknown Menace," etc.

WHEN Clive Halloran came ashore from the small coasting-boat at Melbourne, Australia, he did an unusual thing. But then the coasting-boat had been unusually crowded.

Its passenger list was made up of bush wanderers forced back into the towns to seek a bare living. It included practically every known nationality and species, as is the way of such craft.

Especially species!

Having got ashore, Halloran made his way to the nearest waterside outfitters and went into the walled back yard. There, while shouting orders to the amused proprietor, he took off every stitch of clothing he was wearing, placed his garments in a pile on the stone flags, and set fire to them.

The coasting-boat had been very crowded. But having divested himself of his own passenger list, used the outfitters' bath and arrayed himself in brand new clothes and linen, Halloran felt better.

Such little incidents as this, unpleasant though they are, quite frequently come the way of those who spend their lives traveling. Halloran drew a breath of relief, dismissed the past four

days coasting on an odoriferous Turkish bath of a steamer from his mind, and forthwith turned to the nearest hotel for civilized refreshment.

In Melbourne, he had many friends. He also had a nice, tidy spot of capital left to him after his last venture. And so he had notified a friend of his coming, since he had an idea that starting a small airline business might be both interesting and profitable.

In a certain long bar, famous throughout the Seven Seas, Halloran sought inspiration out of a long glass—and smelled pear drops. It is a scientifically proved fact that the amell of the common or garden pear drop is about as penetrating as that of the gamma ray. Like most men, Halloran could not remember having noticed it since his schooldays.

He glanced around with a grin and looked for the small hoy. He found at his elbow a small man with rather thick spectacles, a short white beard, and a totally bald head. Moreover the small man smiled, shifted something in his mouth and announced:

"Mr. Halloran, I believe?"

"You're right," said Halloran. "About half right, that is. The non-fare-paying passengers of the boat I have just left, got about half of me before I gave up the unequal struggle and let them have my clothes! Still, I don't know that I can remember—"

HE found that the little man was holding out a neat visiting card upon which was inscribed:

PROFESSOR HUMPHREY FLINT
F. R. S., F. Z. S.

"I think I follow your meaning, Mr. Halloran," said Professor Flint with a charming smile. "You see, it so happens that I know a friend of yours, Mr. John Channing. From him I learned some details of your career and—er—your reputation. May I aay that I am honored to make your acquamtance? Mr. Channing told me that you might be arriving on that boat. I saw you go into the outfitter's."

He sbrugged his sboulders.

"I thought that this time was not a tactful one in which to start an acquaintance," he said somewhat dehcately. "A curious coincidence, Mr. Halloran. For many years I have been a keen student of the aocial ants. In fact that is largely the reason—"

"Social!" said Halloran, with a slight shiver. "Believe me, that'a the kind of society for which I have no further ambitions, Professor! Of course, any friend of Channing's is a friend of mine. I am delighted to meet you. But—"

The professaor produced a paper bag from his pocket and proffered it hospitably.

"May I offer you a pear drop?" he inquired. "My throat has always given me trouble, and I find tbem very soothing. No? Very well, Mr. Halloran. Now, with your permission, I will come to the point without further delay. I wish to go up into the Northern Territory. I wish to find a certain district, about which the aborigines have certain quite peculiar legends. For several years I bave been collecting those legends, checking them, and making a roughly accurate map as to the position the district occupies. It is, I fear, extremely remote, in wild, unsxplored country, and far from any of the existing air routes."

"That's pretty interesting," said Halloran. "I've crossed the Northern Territory once or twice, but if Channing's given you the idea that I know it well—"

"Mr. Cbanning told me," said the professor simply, "that if I went there alone, or with ordinary guides, I should either fail to reach my objective altogether, or I should never return alive! In fact, Mr. Channing told me that you, sir, were the only man who would be likely to help me find the place and make it possible for me to carry out my investigations of the termites, before returning.

"He—er—went so far as to say, if you will forgive me, that while you had a habit of getting into trouble, you had a positive genius for getting out of it! Perhaps I should add, also, that Mr. Channing further gave it as his opinion that neither of us would return alive. Although I am not disposed to agree with him."

The professor beamed and took another pear drop.

Halloran slid down off his tall stool,

a slow grin spreading over his forceful, sunburned face.

"Professor," he said, "I think I like you. You've got some quaint scientific theory that you want to check up, or investigate, in a place which you are told on good authority is just sudden death And so you are looking for a man to take you there?"

"In all investigations there are extraneous difficulties," began the professor quietly.

HALLORAN let out an explosive laugh. To hear a high probability of death, by thirst or exposure, described as "an extraneous difficulty" touched his sense of humor—and increased his admiration of Professor Flint, pear drops and all.

"Well, what's the investigation?" he chuckled. "I ought to break John Channing's neck for this. The old scoundrel knows, only too well, the sort of things that tempt me."

"It is most interesting—most interesting," said the professor eagerly. "I told you, my dear Mr. Halloran, that I have spent many years studying the social insects. Those do not include the —er—close companions of your recent voyage. To a large extent, the ant and his sub species—bees and wasps are close relatives—come under the 'social' heading.

"My special studies have been among the hymenoptera. That is, the ants, which build hills or nests and have a complex social system by which they organize and govern their various communities. As you undoubtedly know, the ordinary species found in civilized countries such as England, conduct themselves like a nation, organized by an intelligent government.

"There are the normal males and females with intelligent heads, well developed eyes and wings. Next in caste below them are the wingless but large-headed and powerful soldier ants, who are occupied only in attack or defense. Below them there is the lowest class, the workers, in which we find a simple thorax, no wings, and small, simple eyes instead of the compound organisms only to be found in—"

"Quite so," said Halloran, rather hastily. "I'm deeply interested, of course, Professor. But perhaps we'd better get to the main point, don't you think?"

The professor appeared to swallow the remains of his pear drop.

"I was coming to it, my dear Mr. Halloran," he said. "I was coming to it. In my years of study, I have examined hymenoptera in practically every country of this world. Until I came to Australia, I thought I had investigated every species known to natural history. Then, while traveling in Queensland two years ago, I first heard this legend, spoken of almost in fear by the aborigines. As I say, I followed the legend up and obtained every bit of information about it I could. My interest grew, and I got more details. I found the thing surrounded and obscured by a great deal of superstition and fright—native exaggeration."

"But what was the tale?" said Halloran, almost impatiently.

"It is a tale I have come almost to believe," said the professor quietly. "According to the legend there is, up in the Northern Territory, a type of ant —a colony of ants—which are actually of human intelligence! I have told you already that ordinary ants are almost human in their government and organization. It is an accepted fact that they have their upper and lower classes. Science has proved that they have developed through their history, just as mankind. They have passed through the phase of hunting, where like primitive men, they killed for their food. They went through a pastoral stage—English ants can often be observed catching aphides; tiny, senseless insects. These aphides they keep, and actually milk for the honey dew which the creatures have stored. In actual fact they are keeping cows, just as mankind did in the second stage of human development."

HALLORAN was deeply interested. "Go on," he said.

"Man passed from the pastoral to the agricultural," said the professor. "In other words, he not only kept cows, but he learned how to cultivate the ground and grow crops. The ants have done the same! Many other observers besides myself have found ant-hills in

which large parts of the tunnels and corridors were covered in a growth of fungus. This, the ants use for food. They collect the fungus swamp, bring it to the ant-hill, and plant it there, so that it will grow. Why, Mr. Halloran, certain types of ants even make slaves!

"The *Formica Sanguinea*—a European species—raid the hives of the *Formica Fuscia*, and take pupae; eggs. Those eggs they carry to their own homes, and hatch them out. The new brood, thereafter, are set to work for the raiders. They spend their whole lives as worker-slaves! That is almost human intelligence, Mr. Halloran! Now, according to the legend of which I have spoken, there are ants somewhere in the Northern Territory of more than human intelligence!

"The natives swear that they grow to an enormous size—four or five inches in length. They attack animals; they attack men, even. They build their hills to more than forty feet high. They carry on organized warfare, with armies and scouts, battalions and regiments. They are directed by one governing king, or marshal."

"And that," breathed Halloran, "is where you want me to take you?"

"Mr. Halloran," said the professor, imploringly, "to be first to make such a discovery, to photograph it, to bring back proofs . . . My dear sir, I am told that you are a scientist. Is it necessary for me to say that such an achievement would be worth any trivial risk?"

His eyes were blazing behind the thick lenses of his glasses. His small form was tense; his courage was a challenge.

"Lord help me!" said Halloran. "There's not enough of you to make a decent meal for a dingo dog, but by golly, Professor, you've got what it takes! I'm the biggest fool under the Southern Cross——but I'm your man!"

With a reckless grin he shot out a hand like a bam.

"You'll take me, Mr. Halloran?" cried the professor. "You'll help me—with your knowledge, your resource, your strength and courage?"

"Well, I promise I won't come back without you," chuckled Halloran. "But if we find that ant story is just 'my eye' after all—well, I promise I'll shake hands with every smelly aboriginal we meet on the way home!"

Precisely one week later Clive Halloran found himself well and truly committed to about the grimmest and most unpleasant expedition of his whole hectic career. By one of the established airlines, he and Professor Flint crossed the vast arid wastes of Central Australia, paying a heavy charge for deviation from the normal route to a point which was as near as possible to their objective, according to the professor's rough map

They had supplies for a month, and arranged for the plane to return to that point in one month's time, to pick them up. Then, following the map, they set off into the bush, and for ten days more pushed ahead on as arduous a march as Halloran had ever known.

Out of long experience, Halloran had put together their supplies and packs with extreme care. Each carried a rifle, revolver and ammunition. Food was condensed as much as possible, and the greatest amount of weight was given over to water supply in metal bottles.

Apart from all of which, Halloran carried a special metal case in which, as on previous expeditions, he found much comfort. It was a case of dynamite sticks, carefully packed in special padding. Before now he had blasted his way through a tribe of yelling head-hunters.

ON the whole, he preferred them to overgrown ants, still—

It was on the seventh day that he started swearing quietly at his compass. Magnetic rocks in the district, or magnetic disturbances in the air, were making the needle behave like a tectotum. The sky was heavily overcast with hot, tropic clouds which at this season would not clear for weeks.

There was no means of knowing just how long the compass had been out of reading. In short, Halloran was hopelessly lost, and without the vaguest indication as to direction. More than two hundred miles from the path of any established airline, probably five hundred from the nearest civilization. Water low, and food running short.

"What a nuisance," said Professor Humphrey Flint, when at last the frowning Halloran had to tell him. "It'll increase our difficulties, when returning. Still, we cannot be far away now. I'm so relieved that I've already seen traces which might, most certainly, indicate hymenoptera or termites of really astonishing size."

He pulled out a crumpled packet, but Halloran knocked it out of his hand, scattering pear drops among the tangled undergrowth.

"You'll get just one day to get a nice, big ant to sit for its picture, Professor," he snapped. "Meanwhile, I've no ambition to see you fold up with thirst madness, and those candies of yours are just about the shortest cut there is to it. I have an ambition to get out of this alive, someday, although that doesn't seem likely. And you're coming too!"

One way and another it was an eventful day.

The first event was the finding of a shack, near the crest of a hill. It was built upon wooden supports about four feet from the ground, and was obviously the work of skilful white men. Halloran made for it and took the entrance steps at a run. At least, he intended to.

But in actual fact the solid-looking, three-inch-thick wooden steps collapsed under his feet, as though they had been made of pie crust! The utter unexpectedness of it sent him pitching headlong. He fell waist high across the threshold of the door, and with a ghastly feeling, went straight through that floor, and the supports below, to fall on the grass beneath.

Halloran flung himself up again, his heart turning over. For he saw movement where he fell; glittering, undulating movement all around him. Thousands and myriads of ants—small-headed, wingless, and about half an inch long.

As he jumped up and began staggering out, he drew a sharp breath from between clenched teeth. For as his head rose above the smashed shack floor, he saw an ant such as he had never seen in his life before—and prayed he would never see again.

It was about four feet away, and it was nearly six inches long! On hind legs it was standing almost upright, its multiple eyes glittering in the light from the doorway. The antennae were standing straight up on top of its head, vibrating with a curious, sensitive movement, as though they were sending some kind of etheric, silent signal!

Worst of all, in those multiple eyes, Halloran had a sudden, appalling sense of there being a clear, more than human intelligence. An intelligence of superhuman cunning and cruelty!

Frantically he leaped backwards, beating at his clothes. But in that second, everything around him was gray with whirling dust. Jumping and stamping and beating, he flung himself out into the clear sunshine. To his relief he saw that apparently none of the creatures were upon him. None had made the slightest attack.

HE had heard the little professor talking wildly and excitedly; knew also that he was doing something or other with his camera. Then Halloran saw the shack collapse. It swayed, broke inward. The roof came down, and dust whirled up. Then, like magic, in a few seconds the whole thing was flat—dead flat! Nothing but a spread of dust where it had stood a few moments before.

"Wonderful!" the professor was shouting. "Magnificent! The wood powdered by the tunneling of the ants!"

Halloran was more badly shaken than he had ever been in his life before. He whipped up his dynamite case, loosened the packing, and pulled up two or three sticks, ready for immediate use.

But Professor Flint had turned and was running as fast as his short legs would carry him to the top of the hill. There he paused and shouted again, as Halloran followed.

Halloran heard distinct sounds of movement from the undergrowth. His blood was cold in his veins. A tree, some feet away, seemed to change color as his eyes rested upon it. He knew instinctively that the color change was a swarm of ants which had swept up it—ants that were watching the two intruders with all the cold intensity of their compound eyes.

He had a feeling of being surrounded, of being maneuvred into a trap by millions upon millions of cunning intelligences, all under the domination of an uncanny leader.

"Get your pictures quickly, Professor!" he panted as he reached the little man. "We're getting out of this! There's a limit to everything."

"Yes, indeed," agreed the professor breathlessly. "We are in danger, Mr. Halloran. These creatures are watching our movements. They are planning and marshaling their forces like a well directed army. It is wonderful—wonderful! But of course our investigations will be useless if we cannot carry them back to civilization. Still, look—"

His small, bony hands were trembling as they wound the spool of his camera. Halloran looked, and saw a fairly deep valley, at the bottom of which was a sun-dried river bed. To the right of the river bed the ground dropped away in a sheer cliff, for perhaps two hundred feet. Obviously it had once been an enormous waterfall. But around the valley, towering up on all sides, were tapering black steeples, between fifty and sixty feet high.

Halloran whipped up the binoculars which hung on their strap round the little man's neck. While the camera clicked, and clicked again, he noted the tallest of the unbelievable ant-hills.

And then he stiffened. For on the top of it, on a flat circular platform, he saw an ant which was a foot long, if it was an inch. Yet the body of the creature was actually small in relation to his head. Heavy that head was, with enormous multiple eyes, and jaws which could be seen moving.

On the lower galleries of the hill, armies of workers moved busily, streaming out in lines away through the undergrowth, while lines of them came pouring back. Those that went out carried tiny fragments in their jaws—fragments that might be pieces of leaf as messages or signs.

Halloran dropped his glasses and swung around as he heard a movement from behind. In his opinion, it was just about the unhappiest day he had ever dreamed of spending—a nightmare. He saw that the sound had warned him just in time. Twenty yards behind, and advancing in a straight line like well ordered soldiery, came a brown, gleaming mass of six-inch ants!

Scouts were out ahead of them. Others, larger and differently colored, came lightly in advance of each flanking column, like officers in charge of troops. The undergrowth on either side rustled and whispered with an encircling flank attack.

"GET down to that dry river!" snapped Halloran. "Start running, Professor!"

He threw a dynamite stick straight at that main, advancing army. It took all his courage to stand still, half-crouching, and fling a couple of sticks into the undergrowth on either side, before he whirled round and grabbed the little scientist and ran frantically for the valley.

Three roaring crashes filled the air, their deafening impacts coming quickly after each other. Columns of smoke arose, and there was a curious high-pitched aftermath which seemed like squeakings of myriad tiny voices.

But Halloran was not waiting for anything more. Their retreat was cut off. The only possible safety lay in the river bed, clear of surrounding undergrowth. From there it would be possible to take stock of things.

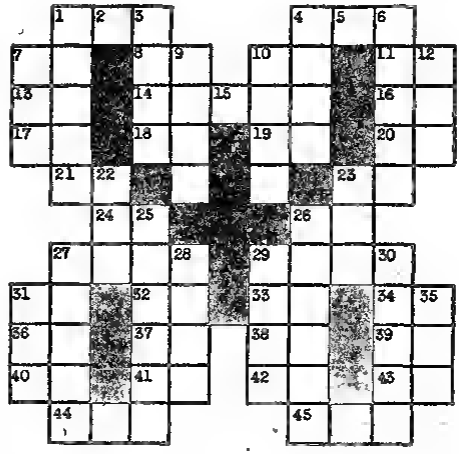
As he ran, Halloran saw one of the giant ant-hills, no more than fifty feet away from him to his right. He saw the frantic activity of the creatures on its galleries, evidently signaling news of the strange explosive attack. He grabbed one of his dynamite sticks as he ran, and slung it with all his might. There was another crash. The smoke cleared, and the towering hill was no more. Then, panting heavily, he and the professor were in the center of the hot, dusty river bed. Behind them was the hundred foot drop of the dried-up falls. Those dried-up waterfalls were only a few feet from their backs as Halloran pulled out another stick and flung it. But his hand was slippery with perspiration. The stick caught awkwardly on the lip of the tin.

"Look out," bowled Halloran, grabbing the professor and bringing him

(Continued on Page 128)

SCIENTIFIC CROSSWORD PUZZLE

This Issue We Present a Brand-New Type of Puzzle—the Answers Are to Be Given in Numerals, Not Letters!



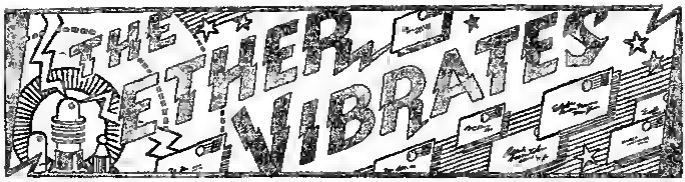
HORIZONTAL

1. The first three integral numbers.
4. Days in a sidereal year.
7. Hours in a civil day.
8. Radius of Terra's orbit (in millions of miles).
6. Elements in the periodic table
11. Number of moons in the Solar System.
13. Atomic number of Osmium
14. Pi to the nearest millionth
16. Spaces in a nine-square
17. Mendeleieff number for Selenium.
18. Heat of fusion of ice
19. Faces of an icosahedron.
20. The house wins on this, if you're playing roulette.
21. Lunar revolutions per solar year
23. Degrees in a zodiacal sign
24. Months in a Gregorian year
26. Distance a body falls the first second
27. Common logarithm of 28
29. First year of the 15th Century.
31. Complement of 60
32. Length of sunspot cycle.
33. Fifth power of two.
34. Seconds in one hour, nearest hundred.
36. Angle of equilateral triangle
37. Atomic number of Inert Radium Emanation
38. Surface gravity of Mars, percentage of g
39. Base of common logarithms (Briggsian).
40. Quarter circle
41. Inclination of the Ecliptic, nearest degree.
42. Degrees of longitude per hour.
43. Height of Torricelli's column of Mercury, cms
44. Ten-thousandth of a straight angle.
45. Standard pressure in millimeters.

VERTICAL

1. Coefficients of $(x-y)^4$.
3. Inches in a meter, nearest hundredth
4. Distance in light-years of a star whose parallax is .001 seconds
5. Number of feet in ten miles.
7. Melting point of frozen water, °Kelvin.
9. Seconds in 53¼ minutes
10. Light-years in 28 parsecs.
12. Fahrenheit reading at 339° C
22. Perimeter of circle whose radius is 50
23. Degrees in a complete circle
25. Base of natural logarithms (Napierian)
26. Repeating decimal of 1/7 (one-seventh).
27. Five Earth-diameters
28. Diameter of Luna, miles.
29. Cube of eleven
30. Days in 2 eclipse cycles (seroses).
31. Result of tripling 1 Horizontal
35. Dr. Ehrlich's Magic Bullet

The answer is on page 129—if you MUST look!



GET ready to embark on the most amazing excursion of all time! A thrill-a-minute journey that begins ten thousand centuries ago and rockets you into the wonderland of tomorrow. It's a fascinating, one-way time-tour we're offering you . . . a breathless non-stop trip from the prehistoric eras of yesterday to the unknown vistas of the future!

In an outstanding scientifiction novel scheduled for the next issue, A MILLION YEARS TO CONQUER, Henry Kuttner paints the magnificent panorama of the strangest quest known to man—a quest that endures for eternity. A quest that began when the Earth was yet a steaming, molten planet, uninhabited.

You'll meet Ardath, the searcher from the stars. And you'll witness mighty empires like forgotten Atlantis crumble to dust as Ardath prepares for the conquest of the future in—A MILLION YEARS TO CONQUER.

Every once in a while a great masterpiece of scientifiction comes along, one that you know instantly will be recognized as a classic of all time. A MILLION YEARS TO CONQUER is such a novel. Come back next issue, see Henry Kuttner's great novel, and you'll be conquered, as we were!

REVIVAL OF THE FITTEST!

Suppose an inquiring reporter from the staff of STARTLING STORIES dropped around to see you, asking for the name of the best scientifiction story you ever read. Making that choice would require plenty of consideration. Certainly the pages of fantasy literature have seen many excellent tales, all distinctive enough to be remembered throughout the years.

For the past two years, in our HALL OF FAME department, we have been publishing gems by the masters of yesteryear. These stories were but a few of the many brilliant classics that helped make scientifiction what it is today, the most intriguing form of fiction in contemporary literature.

Beginning with the next issue, we are inaugurating a new procedure regarding the selection of stories for this department—an innovation that will bring you the six greatest stories of all time!

In a special questionnaire submitted to six of scientifiction's most outstanding followers, men who have read every story published in the last decade, we have invited each of them to recommend the one story they consider the best of all time!

Mr. Sam Moskowitz, well known fantasy fan, has chosen THE MAN WHO EVOLVED, by Edmond Hamilton, as the story he deems the best of all the thousands he has read. We will publish that yarn in the next issue, with an editorial by Mr. Moskowitz telling why that story is his favorite.

Watch forthcoming issues of S S. for a revival of the fittest! Five other well known fans will be represented with their selections. In the meanwhile, send us your list of the best six, and see how many of your suggestions land on our fantasy hit parade!

A CROSS-NUMBER PUZZLE!

How many miles are there in a light year? How far is the distance from the Earth to the Sun? What is the value of pi? If you can answer these numerical questions, and others of the same variety, then try this issue's Scientific Crossword Puzzle. Here, for the first time in the history of any publication, we offer a puzzle based entirely on mathematics. So give us the right numbers, please!

And, if you say the word, forthcoming puzzles will be based on the various sciences. Astronomy, geology, biology, etc. Let's have your comment.

A GALA ISSUE!

Many distinctive stories by star writers in the November issue of STARTLING STORIES! More THRILLS IN SCIENCE. Jack Bindar portrays the life of Sir William Perkin, famous chemist, in his popular series, THEY CHANGED THE WORLD. Ace fiction, features and fact in the fantasy magazine that leads the field!

THE ETHER VIBRATES—with the letters sent in by loyal followers of science fiction. Add your voice! This department is a public forum devoted to your opinions, suggestions and comments—and we're anxious to hear from you. Remember, this is YOUR magazine and is planned to fulfill all your requirements. Let us know which stories and departments you like—and which fail to click with you. A knock's as welcome as a boost—speak right up and we'll print as many of your letters as possible. We cannot undertake to enter into private correspondence. Address THE ETHER VIBRATES, STARTLING STORIES, 22 West 48th St., New York, N. Y.

LETTERS FROM READERS

S.S. TOPS

By Kenneth Bartlett

I enjoy STARTLING STORIES very much In my opinion it is the best scientifiction mag on the market

"Five Steps to Tomorrow," by Binder, was the best story I've ever read I liked it because it wasn't so fantastic Most of the stuff in it could just about happen Keep publishing unfantastic stories, and let's have some more by Eando Binder

P S Enclosed is 25c in coin for your 8 scientifiction booklets.—622 N 2nd Street, Grante Pass Oregon

WANTS DOUBLE-FEATURE MAG

By Harry Schmerje

Your great novel "Five Steps to Tomorrow" was simply swell Better even than "Twice in Time" "The City of the Laying Dead" and "The Worms Turn" were also very good

I have a sensational idea for improving your mag! Just publish two of your great long novels in each issue plus a few short stories doubling the size of the mag Publish it quarterly, charge a quarter for the great mag Thus you could change STARTLING STORIES from 'one of the best' to the finest sf magazine on the newsstand Also have trimmed edges Please publish more letters from readers You only had eight in the July issue See if you can carry out my idea.—319 Stewart Road, Muscatine, Iowa

THE EDITOR AGREES!

By Herbert R. Brown

Can't recall ever having written a word of comment to any s-f magazine before but just having finished M W Wellman's "Twice in Time," I feel called upon to write you

Of the contemporary s-f writers, I have always had a high regard for Wellman His "Battle in the Dawn" made me a fan of his This latest vehicle, "Twice in Time," although necessarily vague about the time machine, ranks him tops with me

I don't believe I have ever read an historical novel with such a wealth of realistic detail On second thought, I guess I have read detail—but usually in a dull dry manner I wonder if the editor will agree with me when I say one actually lived in the Renaissance, while reading Wellman's novel —115-05 156th Street St Albans, New York

A BOUQUET FOR BERGEY

By David Glazer

Binder scores again! "Five Steps to Tomorrow" is great I especially enjoyed the prison sequence It was very convincing Had me on the edge of my chair.

But Hale's spy ray was kinda hard to swallow It was too startling Let's not go too "babyish" in the future, huh? Stick to logical reasoning I don't ask for the so-called "heavy" science story but just a reasonably accurate story

Glad to see you have a new cover artist Bergey He's good Brown was getting monotonous Wesso's illustrating was fine Hall of Fame story was very good, as was Friend's short.—12 Fowler Street, Dorchester, Mass.

THAT WELLMAN WINNER AGAIN!

By Walter Greiz

I have been reading STARTLING STORIES right along now for about a year and I always wanted to write you and tell you how swell your stories really were But after reading the latest issue of STARTLING STORIES I just had to write and tell you that Twice in

(Concluded on Page 122)

(Concluded from Page 121)

Time" by Manly Wade Wellman is the best and swellest story I have read.—5510 Fleet Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio.

MANLY'S MASTERPIECE

By D. B. Thompson

Well, here I sit with the Ides of March still two days away, looking out the window at six inches of new fallen snow, writing you about the May issue of STARTLING STORIES. Some time traveler!

And speaking of time travel, Wellman has produced a masterpiece in "Twice in Time." The story is very, very cleverly done. The ending becomes more and more inevitable throughout the story, yet I'll wager very few readers identified Leo Thrasher with Leonardo da Vinci before the last page was read. Finlay's illustrations are remarkably good.

Friend's "Glamour Girl—2040" is an amusing satire and Gallun presents an interesting variation on the "worlds of the atom" idea.

"Valley of Dreams" seems as good as it did at first reading—and there are enough ideas lying around loose in it and in "A Martian Odyssey" for a dozen good stories but I don't know who would write them.

I wish The Old Home Town's only outstanding science-fiction author (Dr. Breuer) still had time for stories, as he was one of my favorites in other days. Perhaps he could do something with the above-mentioned ideas in Weinbaum's classics.

I'll be back in May.—3136 "Q" Street, Lincoln, Nebraska.

TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE

By Art R. Sehrert

I wrote you once before concerning a Wellman novel you ran—I called it masterful—your May story was "super-masterful."

Then with Weinbaum's "Valley of Dreams"—well, it takes a bigger vocabulary than I have to praise it enough. The issue as a whole was just too good to be true.

I have also just finished "Calling Captain Future." It was excellent.—731 Maury Apt. No. 1, Memphis, Tennessee.

READERS PICK 'EM FROM NOW ON!

By Alfred Edward Maxwell

My compliments to Binder! His novel was truly different in my opinion. It lived and breathed and kept me so enthralled that I only set it down once before finishing it. I have only one minor kick—the comet and the scientific discoveries were a little too "convenient." But still, that is nothing compared to the good points.

Friend's story was okay. The Hall of Fame story was good, but I see where the readers have voted for others far more than that one.

To conclude, here's a vote for Friend's "Of Jovian Build" for re-publication.—545 E. Madison St., Opelousas, La.

(The next six Hall of Fame stories will be selected by a half dozen of scientifiction's most active fans! See beginning of this department for announcement.—Ed.)

GOING IN FOR ART

By Charles Hidley

Although I realize it may come as a pretty broad statement, but since so many of them are being made these days, I will say that "Five Steps to Tomorrow" is the best booklength since the Weinbaum tale. Binder never fails to please the interested reader, and his one fault—insipid sentimentality and heroics—was almost thoroughly deleted from his latest work. It may be virtuous to regret revengeful actions, but hardly human. I'm sure I could not be sorry for any retaliations I made if such atrocities were committed upon my person, as were those heaped upon our poor hero. Revenge is sweet, and he proved it with those wonderful scientific tricks. More Binder and soon.

The cover was good, but not as well drawn as the same artist's pic for the Summer Captain Future yarn. O. J. Friend must be a cousin of the editors, for not one of his many stories has been without a cover, exception **Roar of the Rocket.** The cover should illustrate the feature story and be done by the same artist.

Wesso's work is improved this month, but still not up to the standards of 8 and 10 years ago. That strato-ship was especially good, with the first and last pics being his best this month.

Paul's illustration was superb and the story it represented was one I have long been waiting for. I was certainly not disappointed. I am glad the green twins were finally rewarded for their humane actions of the past. Now let's have no more green men on the cover.

Because the Brown monopoly has now been broken, how about Paul, Finlay, Wesso, Morey et al on the cover? By all means keep Brown, but variety is a virtue few stf mags have nowadays. Brown is an excellent interior artist, so how about some inside illustrations by him.

An increased ETHER VIBRATES would be welcome. The HALL OF FAME stories should be in small print always. The original illustrations should be used.

I still champion the "full page pics only" campaign (one man, I fear). Also one full page pic for every ten pages of story. Example: the Strato-prison falling to Earth.

When will Paul and Morey illustrate the novel? And Marchioni and Binder? So far Wesso, Finlay and Schomburg have been monopolizing.—2541 Aqueduct Avenue, N. Y., N. Y.

MEET THE AUTHOR

Eastward Ho!

By OSCAR J. FRIEND

Author of "The Kid from Mars," and Other Scientifiction Novels and Stories

As you can readily see from the accompanying passport photo, I am a fugitive from a good photographical shop. But, honest, folks, I'm not near as tough a proposition as I look. I have a kind

Oscar J. Friend

heart. And I've noticed, too, that a number of far smarter people than I take pictures that look funny when you slip a number across the front of them. So, why bother about my face? You folks don't have to look at it, and neither do I—except when I shave.

Which brings us to the well known biographical data. According to the best rumors, I was born in St. Louis, Mo., near the close of the nineteenth century. Reared, educated, and married in the Southwest, I finally came East with my family to wind up behind the eight ball of science fiction. What a cosmic cul-de-sac for a writer of detective yarns and cowboy stories!

Trapped in the vortex of star dust, immured in the labyrinth of space-time, lost in the dimensional orbit of the future! (Don't ask me what this stuff means. It simply sounds big and flows well—like a politician's speech—so I just cut loose and let 'er roll.)

And so we wind up in cozy middle life with two

grown daughters and a charming wife, rusticating amid the dogs of Jackson Heights—which, of course, are reminiscent of the Missouri villages of my native state. Sort of keeps me from being homesick, as it were.

The only thing missing in the Missouri mule, and I guess there are enough jackasses here to compensate for that. I've been maliciously accused more than once of being as stubborn as a mule, myself. As for the jassack business—well, who hasn't brayed out of turn occasionally?

All of which dispenses of the author in neat shape, with promptness and dispatch. Which brings us to "The Kid From Mars" himself.

I think reams and tomes and practically libraries have been written about men making expeditions to other planets and other solar systems, but very little, comparatively, has been done with men coming to earth.

You will note that I use the word "man."

So I toyed with this idea. Instead of writing a horror story of conquest and monsters and science gadgets, I thought I would like to humanize the treatment of this subject. And then speculation became rife. How would a human being be received by mankind? What would happen? What could happen? And out of all this fantasy evolved the present story with a slightly cynical, faintly tender, faintly humorous (I hope) treatment.

I tried to present Llamkin to you through the eyes of the skeptical Shayne as a character who amuses you, annoys you, exasperates you, thrills you, and finally becomes tender and lovable to you. It is sheer moonshine which I have tried to present in, not a sophisticated, but a smoother, more adult style than usual in science fiction.

If I have succeeded in giving you one tender thought, one tiny heart throb, one little chuckle of amusement, then I have been more amply repaid than by the check I received from STARTLING STORIES for this novel. And I am content.

REVIEW OF THE SCIENCE FICTION FAN PUBLICATIONS

(Complimentary sample issues of fan journals listed here are available to readers. When requesting your specimen copy, please enclose a three-cent stamp to cover postage. Address your requests to the individual fan magazine editors and please mention STARTLING STORIES.—Ed.)

STARDUST. 2609 Argyle St., Chicago, Ill. Edited by W. Lawrence Hamling, Neil DeJack, Chester S. Geier, Paul Quaiver, Howard Funk, Harry Warner, Jr., and Herschel Jenkinson, Jr.

Robert Moore Williams, Willy Ley, Jack Williamson and Charles R. Tanner among literary headliners in third great issue of this unique fan publication. Mag still rates as tops in the field, with 22 pages of eye-opening contents. New department, "Meet the Fan," introduces prominent fans to the audience. Illustrations plus well-chosen typography make this the leader of the fan mags. L. Sprague DeCamp, Julius Schwartz and others announced for next issue.

• • •

SPACEWAYS. 303 Bryan Place, Hagerstown, Maryland. Edited by Harry Warner, Jr., James S. Avery, and Walter E. Marconette.

Newsy, informal fan departments and scientifiction chatter still strong key features of this fantasy fan mag. 'Stardust" gives and takes of talk of the times. Hoy Ping Pong rings the bell with scientifan articles. Readers' letters ok.

• • •

GOLDEN ATOM. 48 Lewis Street, Rochester, New York. Edited by Larry B. Farsaci, Bernard A. Seufert.

Eighth issue of this fan-mag puts it in fandom's big-time. Contribbers include Edmond Hamilton, P. Schuyler Miller, Clark Ashton Smith, Sam Moskowitz, and others. Interesting articles on fan pseudonyms, favorite stories of fans. Ed Hamilton tells why he hasn't saved the world since several years ago. Amusing.

• • •

POLARIS. 404 S. Lake Ave., Pasadena, Calif. Edited by Paul Freehafer.

Four yarns in current twenty-page issue, authored by Ray Bradbury, Hilary St. Clare, Robert W. Lowndes and R. H. Barlow. Bob Tucker and F. J. Ackerman represented with unusual articles. Ackerman's "Imagi-Movies" should win the scientifilm-goers. Fans speak their piece in straight-from-the-shoulder readers' dept.

• • •

THE COMET. R.F.D. 1, Box 129, Martinez, California. Edited by Tom Wright, J. J. Fortier.

Eye-pleasing format, well-executed color illustrations in this neatly prepared, hectographed fan mag. Fiction, features, fun and fact. And comment on the trend of fantasy, past and present.

• • •

SCIENTI-COMICS. 224 W. 6th St., Hastings, Minn. Edited by Philip Bronson.

And here we have the tops in something or other. The saga of "Robot Doom," in comic-strip technicolor. Buck Rogers, watch out!

• • •

THE M.S.A. BULLETIN. Published by the Maine Scientifiction Association. 49

Washington St., Rumford, Maine. Edited by Gerald W. Mesder.

Prominent personalities of the s-f world profiled in this gazette. News, views, departments, plus interesting odds and ends of interest to the collector and the fan. Leslie A. Croutch's feature, "This 'n That" good

* * *

HORIZONS. 303 Bryan Place, Hagerstown, Maryland. Edited by Harry Warner, Jr., Walter Earl Marconsette, and James S. Avery.

Material interesting in this pub but printing job not the best. Copy that reached us hard on the eyes. The lads have done better

* * *

COSMOS. 11 Northumberland Str, Clovelly, Sydney, Australia. Edited by Molesworth

Gossip, humor, news, and letters in this miniature fan journal. Autographs of contributors stencilled right onto the text. Neat stuff. The Australians go for s-f too, it seems

* * *

FANTASY-NEWS. 31-51 41st St., Long Island City, N. Y. Edited by Will Sykora, Jimmy Taurasi, Sam Moskowitz, and Mario Racic, Jr.

A printed weekly news sheet, replete with the dotage on the professional magazine front. Dotage of the editors, authors, agents and artists reported a la Time fashion. Journal doesn't miss a trick, and relays them all to fans all over the country. You're not well informed on all the news if you don't subscribe to this Winchelian offering

* * *

SCIENCE FICTION WEEKLY. 2574 Bedford Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y. Edited by Robert W. Lowndes, Dick Wilson, Leslie Perri and Chet Cohen.

Invaluable news mag, also with the lowdown on what's doing in the world of fantasy and fandom. Well edited, with news items played up dramatically, according to scoop value and importance. By all means deserves your examination

KINGDOM OF THE ANTS

(Continued from Page 118)

down with a thud.

The stick whirled ten feet only or so through the air before dropping. Then the crash came. Halloran had the impression that he was literally being blown to pieces. Half the clothes were torn from his back, and he was lifted clear of the ground.

Instinctively he clung to the professor's body—and then in a mighty roar, as of a sudden thunder, he felt them both falling, and knew that an avalanche down the falls had already started. . . .

Thunder was still filling Clive Halloran's ears when he awoke. But it was the thunder of airplane engines running at full throttle outside a glass-windowed compartment. He could not believe it. It was difficult to believe, even when a man in an Australian Airways' uniform bent over him and grinned.

"Feeling better?" inquired the airman.

"Thank heaven!" Halloran said, and drew a deep, shuddering breath.

"Mr. Channing insisted that we come and look for you," said the airman. "Good job we did, too. Spotted you carrying your pal along a dried-up river bed, with forest fires raging all around you, over a distance of miles. Never seen such a blaze. It was that which attracted us to the spot. Luckily the river bed gave us clear enough space for landing and takeoff. Shows how a strain affects a man's mind—you were yammering about ants a foot long that could talk."

IT was a week later that Halloran was carried into a Melbourne hospital, and it was five weeks after that before the hospital authorities told him that his nervous system was once again in perfect trim. That was the first time, too, that they would let him see the one good photograph that had been taken from a badly-smashed camera. It was the photograph of an ant, on the top of an ant-hill.

"Queer blokes, you scientists," said the doctor who showed it to him. "Fancy going through all that for an

ordinary blinking insect no longer than your thumbnail."

"No longer?" snapped Halloran. "That creature was a foot—"

He stopped suddenly. There was nothing by which to compare the size of the ant-hill or the ant. The background was just the distant clouds. And he remembered that the hospital authorities had always talked soothingly when he spoke about giant ants. Now he wanted to get out and about. He didn't want them to think him crazy.

"Well, I'm all right now," he said. "I can go today, can't I?"

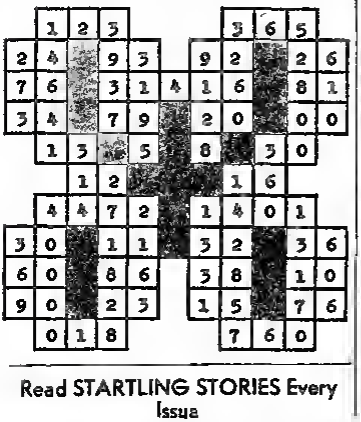
"Yes, you've forgotten your funny tales now, Halloran," the doctor said. "No more ants like elephants."

"And the professor?" asked Halloran. "You haven't told me much about him. How is that plucky little human wonder?"

"We didn't tell you before, Halloran," the doctor said simply. "He was buried up country at Cloncurry. When the search party found you . . . well, old boy, you were staggering along, carrying a man who had been dead for a couple of days and more! It was fine work, Halloran. I'm sorry."

Halloran shook hands in silence, took his hat, and walked out of the hospital.

Answer to Puzzle on Page 119



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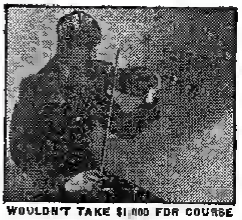
* *A. O., Minn.*



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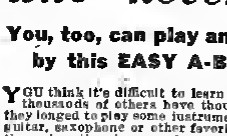

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